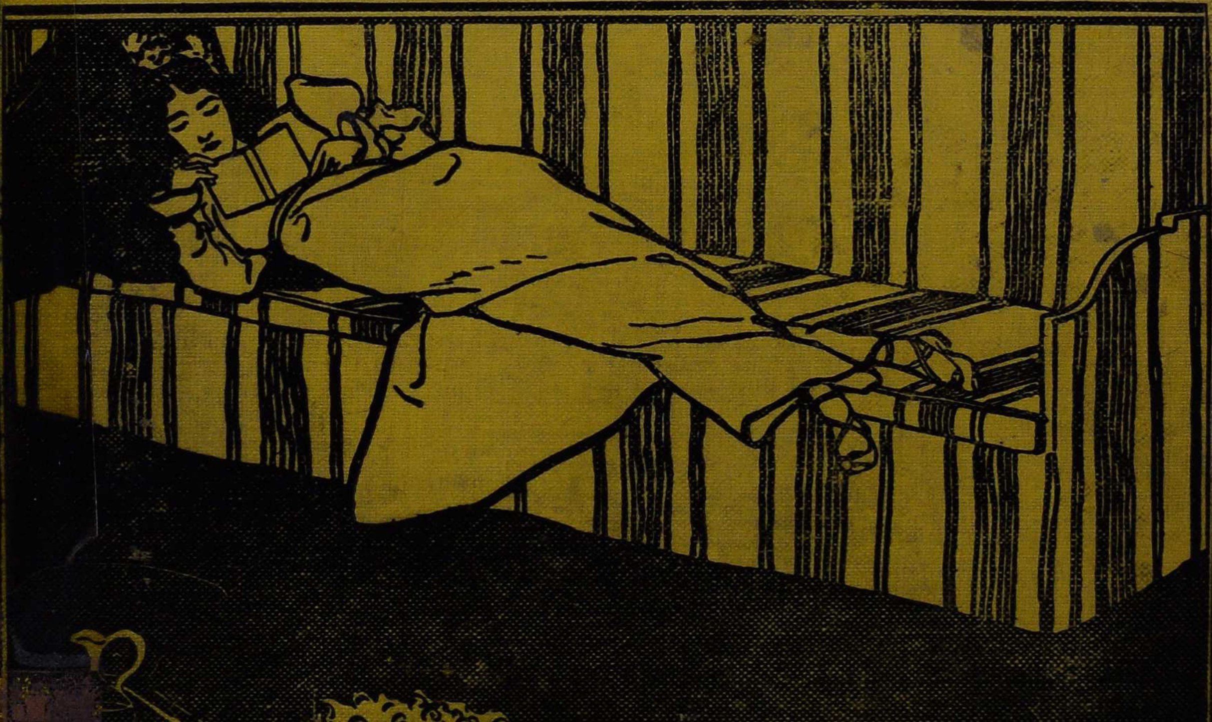
The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume V April 1895



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$1.50
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London: John Lane
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London : John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo Street
Boston : Copeland & Day

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Bodley Heads
No. 3 : George Egerton

By E. A. Walton

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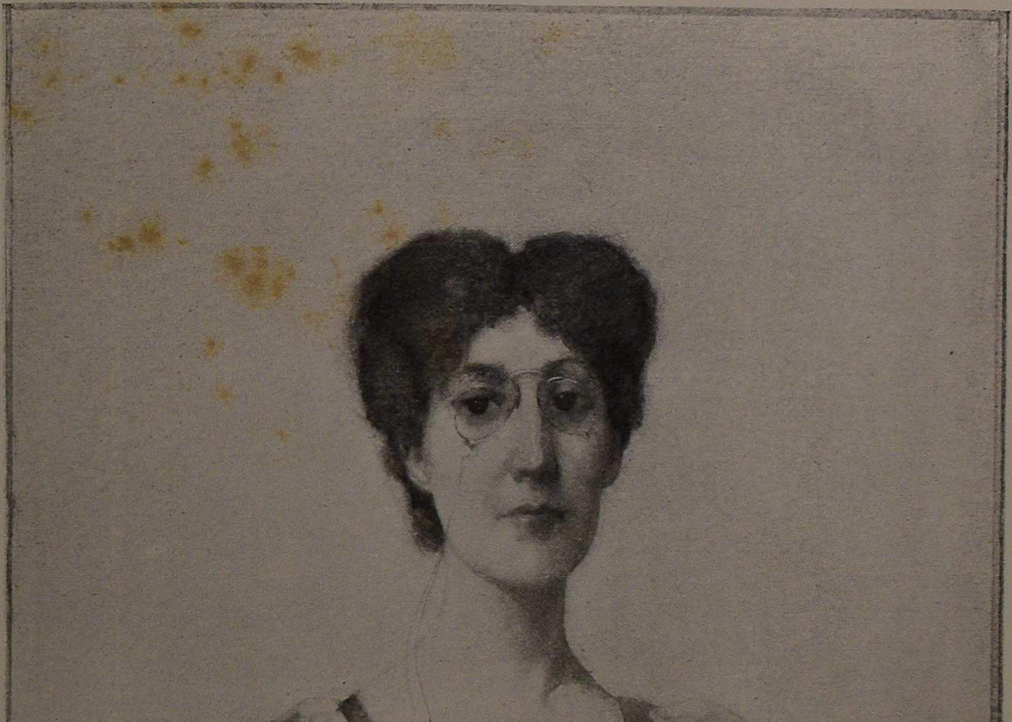

Hymn to the Sea[*]

By William Watson

I

GRANT, O regal in bounty, a subtle and delicate largess ;
Grant an ethereal alms, out of the wealth of thy soul :
Suffer a tarrying minstrel, who finds and not fashions his numbers,—
Who, from the commune of air, cages the volatile song,—
Here to capture and prison some fugitive breath of thy descant,
Thine and his own as thy roar lisped on the lips of a shell,
Now while the vernal impulsion makes lyrical all that hath language,
While, through the veins of the Earth, riots the ichor of Spring,

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While, with throes, with raptures, with loosing of bonds, with unsealings,—
Arrowy pangs of delight, piercing the core of the world,—
Tremors and coy unfoldings, reluctances, sweet agitations,—
Youth, irrepressibly fair, wakes like a wondering rose.

II

Lover whose vehement kisses on lips irresponsive are squandered,
Lover that wooest in vain Earth's imperturbable heart ;
Athlete mightily frustrate, who pittest thy thews against legions,
Locked with fantastical hosts, bodiless arms of the sky ;
Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest and never art broken,
Like unto thine, from of old, springeth the spirit of man,—
Nature's wooer and fighter, whose years are a suit and a wrestling,
All their hours, from his birth, hot with desire and with fray ;

Amorist agonist man, that immortally pining and striving,
Snatches the glory of life only from love and from war;
Man that, rejoicing in conflict, like thee when precipitate tempest,
Charge after thundering charge, clangs on thy resonant mail,
Seemeth so easy to shatter, and proveth so hard to be cloven;
Man whom the gods, in his pain, curse with a soul that endures;
Man whose deeds, to the doer, come back as thine own exhalations
Into thy bosom return, weepings of mountain and vale;
Man with the cosmic fortunes and starry vicissitudes tangled,
Chained to the wheel of the world, blind with the dust of its speed,
Even as thou, O giant, whom trailed in the wake of her conquests
Night's sweet despot draws, bound to her ivory car;
Man with inviolate caverns, impregnable holds in his nature,
Depths no storm can pierce, pierced with a shaft of the sun;

Man that is galled with his confines, and burdened yet more with his vastness,
Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his goal;
Man whom Fate, his victor, magnanimous, clement in triumph,
Holds as a captive king, mewed in a palace divine:
Wide its leagues of pleasance, and ample of purview its windows;
Airily falls, in its courts, laughter of fountains at play;
Nought, when the harpers are harping, untimely reminds him of durance;
None, as he sits at the feast, whisper Captivity's name;
But, would he parley with Silence, withdraw for awhile unattended,
Forth to the beckoning world 'scape for an hour and be free,
Lo, his adventurous fancy coercing at once and provoking,
Rise the unscalable walls, built with a word at the prime;
Lo, immobile as statues, with pitiless faces of iron,
Armed at each obstinate gate, stand the impassable guards.

III

Miser whose coffered recesses the spoils of eternity cumber,
Spendthrift foaming thy soul wildly in fury away,—
We, self-amorous mortals, our own multitudinous image
Seeking in all we behold, seek it and find it in thee :
Seek it and find it when o'er us the exquisite fabric of Silence
Briefly perfect hangs, trembles and dulcetly falls ;
When the aërial armies engage amid orgies of music,
Braying of arrogant brass, whimper of querulous reeds ;
When, at his banquet, the Summer is purple and drowsed with repletion ;
When, to his anchorite board, taciturn Winter repairs ;
When by the tempest are scattered magnificent ashes of Autumn ;
When, upon orchard and lane, breaks the white foam of the Spring :
When, in extravagant revel, the Dawn, a bacchante upleaping,
Spills, on the tresses of Night, vintages golden and red ;
When,

When, as a token at parting, munificent Day, for remembrance,
Gives, unto men that forget, Ophirs of fabulous ore ;
When, invincibly rushing, in luminous palpitant deluge,
Hot from the summits of Life, poured is the lava of noon ;
When, as yonder, thy mistress, at height of her mutable glories,
Wise from the magical East, comes like a sorceress pale.
Ah, she comes, she arises,—impassive, emotionless, bloodless,
Wasted and ashen of cheek, zoning her ruins with pearl.
Once she was warm, she was joyous, desire in her pulses abounding :
Surely thou lovedst her well, then, in her conquering youth !
Surely not all unimpassioned, at sound of thy rough serenading,
She, from the balconied night, unto her melodist leaned,—

Leaned unto thee, her bondsman, who keepest to-day her commandments,
All for the sake of old love, dead at thy heart though it lie.

IV

Yea, it is we, light perverts, that waver, and shift our allegiance;
We, whom insurgence of blood dooms to be barren and waste;
We, unto Nature imputing our frailties, our fever and tumult;
We, that with dust of our strife sully the hue of her peace.
Thou, with punctual service, fulfillest thy task, being constant;
Thine but to ponder the Law, labour and greatly obey:
Wherefore, with leapings of spirit, thou chantest the chant of the faithful,
Chantest aloud at thy toil, cleansing the Earth of her stain;

Leagued in antiphonal chorus with stars and the populous Systems,
Following these as their feet dance to the rhyme of the Suns;
Thou thyself but a billow, a ripple, a drop of that Ocean,
Which, labyrinthine of arm, folding us meshed in its coil,
Shall, as now, with elations, august exultations and ardours,
Pour, in unfaltering tide, all its unanimous waves,
When, from this threshold of being, these steps of the Presence, this precinct,
Into the matrix of Life darkly divinely resumed,
Man and his littleness perish, erased like an error and cancelled,
Man and his greatness survive, lost in the greatness of God.

The Papers of Basil Fillimer

By H. D. Traill

My name is Johnson, just plain John Johnson—nothing more subtle than that; and my individuality is, as they say, "in a concatenation accordingly." In other words, the character of my intellect is exactly what you would expect in a man of my name. This was well known to my old friend, schoolmate, and fellow-student at Oxford, the late Basil Fillimer; a man of the very subtlest mind that I should think has ever housed itself in human body since the brain of the last mediæval schoolman ceased to "distinguish." Yet Basil Fillimer must needs appoint me—*me* of all men in the world—his literary executor, and charge me with the duty of making a selection from his papers and preparing them for publication. They include a series of "Analytic Studies," a diary extending over several years, and a three-volume novel turning on the question whether the hero before marrying the heroine was or was not bound to communicate to her the fact that he had once unjustly suspected her mother of circulating reports injurious to the reputation of his aunt.

Basil knew, I say—he must have known—that I was quite unable to follow him in these refined speculations. Hence I can only suppose that at the time when his will was drawn he had not yet discovered my psychological incompetence, and that after he

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had made that discovery his somewhat sudden death prevented him from appointing some one of keener analytical acumen in my place.

It would not be fair to the novel, in case it should ever be published, to give any specimens of it here; it might discount the reader's interest in the development of the plot. But this is the sort of thing the diary consists of:

"*June* 15.—Went yesterday to call on my aunt Catherine and found her more troubled than ever about the foundations of her faith. It is a singular phenomenon this awakening of doubt in an elderly mind—this 'St. Martin's summer' of scepticism if I may so call it; an intensely curious and at the same time a painful study. For me it has so potent a fascination, that I never say or do anything, even in what at the time seems to me perfect good faith, to invite a continuance of my aunt's confidences, without afterwards suspecting my own motives. My first inclination was to divert her mind to other subjects. Why, I asked myself, should an old lady of seventy-two who has all her life accepted the conventional religion without question be encouraged to what the French call *faire son âme* at this extremely late hour of the day? Still you can't very well tell any old lady, even though she is your aunt, that you think she is too old to begin bothering herself with these high matters. You have to put it just the other way, and suggest that she has probably many years of life before her, and will have plenty of time for such speculations later on. But the first sentence I tried to frame in this sense reminded me so ludicrously of Mrs. Quickly's consolations of the dying Falstaff, that I had to stop for fear of laughing, and allow her to go on. For reply I put her off at the time with commonplaces, but she has since renewed the conversation so often that I feel I shall be obliged to disclose some of my own opinions, which are of course of a much more advanced scepticism than hers. I have considered the question of disguising or qualifying them, and have come without doubt—or I think without much doubt—to the conclusion that I am not justified in doing so. I have never believed in the morality of—

Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,
  Her early Heaven, her happy views;
  Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

"Besides, there is no interpretation clause at the end of *In Memoriam* to say that the term 'sister' shall include 'maiden aunt.' Moreover, I have every reason to suspect that my aunt Catherine has ceased to pray, and I am sure her days are anything but 'melodious' just now, poor old soul. It is all very well to respect other people's religious illusions as long as they remain undisturbed in the minds of those who harbour them. So long the maxim *Wen Gott betrügt ist wohl betrogen* undoubtedly applies. But what if the Divine Deceiver begins to lose his power of deceiving? Is it the business of any of his creatures to come to his assistance?

"*June* 20.—I have just returned from an hour's interview with my aunt, who almost immediately opened out on the question of her doubts. She spoke of them in tones of profound, indeed of almost tragic agitation; and I could not bring myself to say anything which would increase her mental anguish, as I thought might happen if I confessed to sharing them. I accordingly found myself reverting after all to the old commonplaces,—that 'these things were mysteries' and so forth (which of course is exactly the trouble), and the rest of the 'vacant chaff well meant for grain.' It had a soothing effect at the time, and I returned home well pleased with my own wise humanity, as I thought it. But now that I look back upon it and examine my mixed motives, I am forced to admit that there was more of cowardice than compassion in the amalgam. I was not even quite sincere, I now find, in pleading to myself my aunt's distress of mind as an excuse for the concealment, or rather the misrepresentation, of my opinions. I knew at the time that she had had a bad night and that she is suffering severely just now from suppressed gout. In other words, I was secretly conscious at the back of my mind that the abnormal excess of her momentary sufferings was due to physical and not mental causes, and would yield readily enough to colchicum or salicylic acid, which no one has ever ranked among Christian apologetics. Yet I persuaded myself for the moment that it was this quite exceptional and transitory state of my aunt's feelings which compelled me to keep silence.

"*June* 23.—To-day I have had what seems—or seemed to me, for I have not yet had time for a thorough analysis—a clear indication of my only rational and legitimate course. My aunt Catherine said plainly to me this afternoon that as she had gathered from our conversations that my views were strictly orthodox, she would not pain me in future by any further disclosures of her own doubts. At the same time, she added, it was only right to tell me that my pious advice had done her no good, but, on the contrary, harm, since there was to her mind nothing so calculated to confirm scepticism as the sight of a man of good understanding thus firmly wedded to certain received opinions of which nevertheless he was unable to offer any reasonable defence or even intelligible explanation whatsoever. Upon this hint I of course spoke. It was clear that if my silence only increased my aunt's trouble, and that if, further, it threatened to convict me unjustly of stupidity, I was clearly entitled, as well on altruistic as on self-regarding grounds, to reveal my true opinions. In fact, I thought at the time that I had never acted under the influence of a motive so clearly visible along its whole course from Thought to Will, and so manifestly free from any the smallest fibre of impulse having its origin in the subliminal consciousness. Yet now I am beginning to doubt.

"*June* 24.—On a closer examination I feel that my motive was *not*, as I then thought, compounded equally of a legitimate desire to vindicate my own intelligence and of a praiseworthy anxiety not to add to my aunt's spiritual perplexities, but that it was subtly tainted with an illegitimate longing to continue my study of her curious case. Consequently, I cannot now assure myself that if I had not known that further concealment of my opinions would arrest my aunt's confidences and thus deprive me of a keen psychological pleasure (which I have no right to enjoy at her expense) the legitimate inducements to candour that were presented to me would of themselves have prevailed."

There is much more of the same kind; but I will cut it short at this point, not only to escape a headache, but to ask any impartial reader into whose hands this apology may fall, whether, I—who as I said before am not only John Johnson by name but by nature—am a fit and proper person to edit the posthumous papers of Basil Fillimer.

I come now, however, to what I consider my strongest justification for declining this literary trust. Though I had, and indeed still retain, the highest admiration for Basil Fillimer's intellectual subtlety, and though, confessing myself absolutely unable to follow him into his refinements of analysis, I hazard this opinion with diffidence, I do not think that, except in their curiosity as infinitely delicate and minute mental processes, his speculations are of any value to the world. I have formed this opinion in my rough-and-ready way from a variety of circumstances;

stances; but in support of it I rely mainly upon an incident which occurred within a few months of my lamented friend's death, and which formed to the best of my knowledge the sole passage of sentiment in his intensely speculative career.

To say that he fell in love would be to employ a metaphor of quite inappropriate violence. He "shaded off" from a colourless indifference to a certain young woman of his acquaintance through various neutral tints of regard into a sort of pale sunset glow of affection for her. Eleanor Selden was a first cousin of my own. We had seen much of each other from childhood upwards, and I knew—or thought I knew—her well. She was a lively, good-natured, commonplace girl, without a spark of romance about her, and all a woman's eye to the main chance. I don't mean by this that she was more mercenary than most girls. She merely took that practical view of life and its material requirements which has always seemed to me (only I am not a psychologist) to be so much more common among young people of what is supposed to be the sentimental sex, than of the other. I daresay she was not incapable of love—among appropriate surroundings. Unlike some women, she was not constitutionally unfitted to appear with success in the matrimonial drama; but she was particular about the *mise-en-scène*. "Act I., A Cottage," would not have suited her at all. She would have played the wife's part with no spirit, I feel convinced. As to "Act V., A Cottage," with an "interval of twenty years supposed to elapse" between that and the preceding act, I doubt whether she would ever have reached it at all.

I imparted these views of mine as delicately as I could to my accomplished friend, but they produced no impression on him. He told me kindly but firmly that I was altogether mistaken. He had, he said, made a particularly careful study of Eleanor's character and had arrived at the confident conclusion that absolute unselfishness formed its most distinctive feature. Nor was he at all shaken in this opinion by the fact that when a little later on he informed her of the nature of his sentiments towards her, he found that she agreed with him in thinking that his then income was not enough to marry upon, and that they had better wait until the death of an uncle of his from whom he had expectations. I felt rather curious to know what passed at the interview between them, and questioned him on the subject.

"As to this objection on the ground of the insufficiency of your income, did it come from you," I asked, "or from her?"

"What a question," said Basil, contemptuously. "From me of course."

"But at once?"

"How do you mean, at once?"

"Well, was there any interval between your telling her you loved her and your adding that you did not think you were well enough off to marry just at present?"

"Any interval? No, of course not. It would have been obviously unfair and ungenerous on my part to have made her a declaration of love without at the same time adding that I could not ask her to share my present poverty and——"

"Oh," I interrupted, "you said that at the same time, did you? Then she had nothing to do but to agree?"

"Well, no, of course not," said Basil. "But, my dear fellow," he continued, with his usual half-pitying smile, "you don't see the point. The point is, that she agreed reluctantly—indeed with quite obvious reluctance."

"Did she press you to reconsider your decision?'

"Well, no, she could hardly do that, you know. It would not be quite consistent with maidenly reserve and so forth. But she again and again declared her perfect readiness to share my present fortunes."

"Ah! she did that, did she?"

"Yes, and even after she must have seen that my decision was inflexible."

"Oh! *even* after that: but not before? Thank you, I think I understand."

And I thought I did, as also did Basil. But I fancy our reading of the incident was not the same.

A closer intimacy now followed between the two. They were not engaged; Basil had been beforehand in insisting that her future freedom of choice should not be fettered, and she again "reluctantly,—indeed with quite obvious reluctance," had agreed. They were much in each other's company, and Basil, who used to read her some of the most intricate psychological chapters in his novel, in which she showed the greatest interest, conceived a very high idea of her intellectual gifts. "She has," he said, "by far the subtlest mind for a woman that I ever came in contact with."

"Do you ever talk to her about your uncle?" I asked him one day.

"Oh yes, sometimes," he replied. "And, by the way," he added, suddenly, "that reminds me. To show you how unjust is the view you take of your cousin's motives, as no doubt you do of human nature generally like most superficial students of it (excuse an old friend's frankness), I may tell you that although there have been many occasions when she might have put the question with perfect naturalness and propriety, she has never once inquired the amount of my uncle's means."

"It is very much to her credit," said I.

"It is true," he added, after a moment's reflection and with a half-laugh, "I could not have told her if she had. His money is all in personalty, and he is a close old chap."

"Oh," I said, "have you ever by chance mentioned that to her?"

"Eh? What?" answered Basil, absently, for, as his manner was, he was drifting away on some underground stream of his own thoughts. "Mentioned it? I don't recollect. I daresay I have. Probably I must have done. Why do you ask?"

"Well," said I, "because if she knew you could not answer the question that might account for her not asking it."

But he was already lost in reverie, and I did not feel justified in rousing him from it for no worthier purpose than that of hinting suspicion of the disinterestedness of a blood relation.

In due time—or at least in what the survivors considered due time, though I don't suppose the poor old gentleman so regarded it—Basil's uncle died, and the nephew found himself the heir to a snug little fortune of about £900 a year. As soon as he was in possession of it he wrote to Eleanor, acquainting her with the change in his circumstances, and renewing his declaration of love, accompanied this time with a proposal of immediate marriage. I happened to look in upon him at his chambers on the evening of the day on which the letter had been despatched, and he told me what he had done.

"Ah!" said I, "now, then, we shall see which of us is right. But no," I added, on a moment's reflection, "after all, it won't prove anything; for I suppose we both agree that she is likely to accept you now, and I can't deny that she can do so with perfect propriety."

Basil looked at me as from a great height, a Gulliver conversing with a Lilliputian.

"Dear old Jack," he said, after a few moments of obviously amused silence, "you are really most interesting. What makes you think she will say Yes?"

"What!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "Don't you think so yourself?"

"On the contrary," replied Basil, with that sad patient smile of his, "I am perfectly convinced that she will say No."

I did not pursue the conversation, for my surprise at his opinion had by this time disappeared. It occurred to me that after all it was not unnatural in a man who had conceived so exalted an estimate of Eleanor's character. No doubt he thought her too proud to incur the suspicion which might attach to her motives in accepting him after this accession to his fortunes. I felt sure, however, that he was mistaken, and it was therefore with renewed and much increased surprise that I read the letter which he placed in my hand with quiet triumph a few days afterwards.

It was a refusal. Eleanor thanked him for his renewal of his proposal, said she should always feel proud of having won the affection of so accomplished a man, but that having carefully examined her own heart, she felt that she did not love him enough to marry him.

Basil, I feel sure, was as fond of my cousin as it was in his nature to be of anybody; but he was evidently much less disappointed by her rejection than pleased with the verification of his forecast. I confess I was puzzled at its success.

"How did you know she would refuse you?" I asked. "I must say that *I* thought her sufficiently alive to her own interests to accept you."

Basil gently shook his head.

"But I suppose *you* thought that she would reject you for fear of being considered mercenary."

Basil still continued to shake his head, but now with a provokingly enigmatic smile.

"No? But confound it," I cried, out of patience, "there are only these two alternatives in every case of this kind."

"My dear Jack," said Basil, after a few moments' contemplation of me, "you have confounded it yourself. You are confusing act with motive. It is true there are only two possible replies to the question I asked Miss Selden; but the series af alternating motives for either answer is infinite."

"Infinite?" echoed I, aghast.

"Yes," said Basil, dreamily. "It is obviously infinite, though the human faculties in their present stage of development can only follow a few steps of it. Would you really care to know," he continued kindly, after a pause, "the way in which I arrived at my conclusion?"

"I should like it of all things," I said.

"Then you had better just take a pencil and a sheet of paper," said Basil. "You will excuse the suggestion, but to any one unfamiliar with these trains of thought some aid of the kind is positively necessary. Now, then, let us begin with the simplest case, that of a girl of selfish instincts and blunt sensibilities, who looks out for as good a match, from the pecuniary point of view, as she can make, and doesn't very much care to conceal the fact."

("Eleanor down to the ground," I thought to myself.)

"She would have said Yes to my question, wouldn't she?"

"No doubt."

"Very well, then, kindly mark that *Case A*."

I did so.

"Next, we come to a girl of a somewhat higher type, not perhaps indifferent to pecuniary considerations, but still too proud to endure the suspicion of having acted upon them in the matter of marriage. She would answer No, wouldn't she?"

"Yes," said I, eagerly. "And surely that is the way in which *you* must explain Eleanor's refusal."

"Pardon me," said Basil, raising a deprecating hand, "it is not quite so simple as that. But have you got that down? If so, please mark it *Case B.* Thirdly, we get a woman of a nobler nature who would have too much faith in her lover's generosity to believe him capable of suspecting her motives, and who would welcome the opportunity of showing that faith. Have you got that down?"

"Yes, every word," said I. "But, my dear fellow, that is a woman whose answer would be Yes."

"Exactly," replied Basil, imperturbably. "Mark it *Case C.* And now," he continued, lighting a cigarette, "have the goodness to favour me with your particular attention to this. There is a woman of moral sensibilities yet more refined who would fear lest her lover should suspect her of being actuated by motives *really* mercenary, but veiled under the *pretence* of a desire to demonstrate her reliance on his faith in her disinterestedness, and who would consequently answer No. Do you follow that?"

"No, I'll be damned if I do!" I cried, throwing down the pencil.

"Ah," said Basil, sadly, "I was afraid so. Nevertheless, for convenience of reference, mark it *Case D.* There are of course numberless others; the series, as I have said, is infinite. There is Case E, that of the woman who rises superior to this last-mentioned fear, and says Yes; and there is Case F, that of the woman who fears to be suspected of only feigning such superiority, and says No. But it is probably unnecessary to carry the analysis further. You believe that Miss Selden's refusal of me comes under Case B; I, on the other hand, from my experience of the singular subtlety and delicacy of her intellectual operations, am persuaded that it belongs to the D category. Her alleged excuse is, of course, purely conventional. Her plea that she is unable to love me," he added with an indescribable smile, "is, for instance, absurd. I will let a couple of months or so elapse, and shall then take steps to ascertain from her whether it was the motive of Case B or that of Case D by which she has been really actuated."

The couple of months, alas! were not destined to go by in Basil's lifetime. Three weeks later my poor friend was carried off by an attack of pneumonia, and I was left with this unsolved problem of conduct on my mind.

I was, however, determined to seek the solution of it, and the first time I met Eleanor I referred it to herself. I had taken the precaution to bring my written notes with me so as to be sure that the question was correctly stated.

"Nelly," said I, for, as I have already said, we were not only cousins, but had been brought up together from childhood, "I want you to tell me, your oldest chum, *why* you refused Basil Fillimer. Was it because you were too proud to endure the suspicion of having married for money, or was it—now for goodness' sake don't interrupt me just here," for I saw Nelly's smiling lips opening to speak; "or was it," I continued, carefully reading from my paper, "because you feared lest he should suspect you of being actuated by motives *really* mercenary but veiled under the *pretence* of a desire to demonstrate your reliance on his faith in your disinterestedness?"

The smile broke into a ringing laugh.

"Why, you stupid Jack," cried Eleanor, "what nonsense of poor dear old Basil's have you got into your head? Why did I refuse him? You who have known me all my life to ask such a question! Now did you—*did* you think I was the sort of girl to marry a man with only nine hundred a year?"

Candidly, I did not. But poor Basil did. And that, as I said before, is one and perhaps the strongest among many reasons why I think that his studies of human character and analyses of human motive, though intellectually interesting, would not be likely to prove of much practical value to the world.

Song

By Richard Le Gallienne

SHE's somewhere in the sunlight strong,
  Her tears are in the falling rain,
She calls me in the wind's soft song,
  And with the flowers she comes again ;

Yon bird is but her messenger,
  The moon is but her silver car,
Yea ! sun and moon are sent by her,
  And every wistful, waiting star.

The Pleasure-Pilgrim

By Ella D'Arcy

I

CAMPBELL was on his way to Schloss Altenau, for a second quiet season with his work. He had spent three profitable months there a year ago, and now he was devoutly hoping for a repetition of that good fortune. His thoughts outran the train; and long before his arrival at the Hamelin railway station, he was enjoying his welcome by the Ritterhausens, was revelling in the ease and comfort of the old castle, and was contrasting the pleasures of his home-coming—for he looked upon Schloss Altenau as a sort of temporary home—with his recent cheerless experiences of lodging-houses in London, hotels in Berlin, and strange indifferent faces everywhere. He thought with especial satisfaction of the Maynes, and of the good talks Mayne and he would have together, late at night, before the great fire in the hall, after the rest of the household had gone to bed. He blessed the adverse circumstances which had turned Schloss Altenau into a boarding-house, and had reduced the Freiherr Ritterhausen to eke out his shrunken revenues by the reception, as paying guests, of English and American pleasure-pilgrims.

He rubbed the blurred window-pane with the fringed end of the strap hanging from it, and, in the snow-covered landscape reeling towards him, began to recognise objects that were familiar. Hamelin could not be far off. . . . . In another ten minutes the train came to a standstill.

He stepped down from the overheated atmosphere of his compartment into the cold bright February afternoon, and through the open station doors saw one of the Ritterhausen carriages awaiting him, with Gottlieb in his second-best livery on the box. Gottlieb showed every reasonable consideration for the Baron's boarders, but he had various methods of marking his sense of the immense abyss separating them from the family. The use of his second-best livery was one of these methods. Nevertheless, he turned a friendly German eye up to Campbell, and in response to his cordial "Guten Tag, Gottlieb. Wie geht's? Und die Herrschaften?" expressed his pleasure at seeing the young man back again.

While Campbell stood at the top of the steps that led down to the carriage and the Platz, looking after the collection of his luggage and its bestowal by Gottlieb's side, he became aware of two persons, ladies, advancing towards him from the direction of the Wartsaal. It was surprising to see any one at any time in Hamelin station. It was still more surprising when one of these ladies addressed him by name.

"You are Mr. Campbell, are you not?" she said. "We have been waiting for you to go back in the carriage together. When we found this morning that there was only half-an-hour between your train and ours, I told the Baroness it would be perfectly absurd to send to the station twice. I hope you won't mind our company?"

The first impression Campbell received was of the magnificent apparel of the lady before him; it would have been noticeable in

Paris or Vienna—it was extravagant here. Next, he perceived that the face beneath the upstanding feathers and the curving hat-brim was that of so very young a girl as to make the furs and velvets seem more incongruous still. But the incongruity vanished with the intonation of her first phrase, which told him she was an American. He had no standards for American dress or manners. It was clear that the speaker and her companion were inmates of the Schloss.

Campbell bowed, and murmured the pleasure he did not feel. A true Briton, he was intolerably shy; and his heart sank at the prospect of a three-mile drive with two strangers who evidently had the advantage of knowing all about him, while he was in ignorance of their very names. As he took his place opposite to them in the carriage, he unconsciously assumed a cold blank stare, pulling nervously at his moustache, as was his habit in moments of discomposure. Had his companions been British also, the ordeal of the drive would certainly have been a terrible one; but these young American girls showed no sense of embarrassment whatever.

"We've just come back from Hanover," said the one who had already spoken to him. "I go over once a week for a singing lesson, and my little sister comes along to take care of me."

She turned a narrow, smiling glance from Campbell to her little sister, and then back to Campbell again. She had red hair, freckles on her nose, and the most singular eyes he had ever seen; slit-like eyes, set obliquely in her head, Chinese fashion.

"Yes, Lulie requires a great deal of taking care of," assented the little sister, sedately, though the way in which she said it seemed to imply something less simple than the words themselves. The speaker bore no resemblance to Lulie. She was smaller, thinner, paler. Her features were straight, a trifle peaked; her skin sallow; her hair of a nondescript brown. She was much less gorgeously dressed. There was even a suggestion of shabbiness in her attire, though sundry isolated details of it were handsome too. She was also much less young; or so, at any rate, Campbell began by pronouncing her. Yet presently he wavered. She had a face that defied you to fix her age. Campbell never fixed it to his own satisfaction, but veered in the course of that drive (as he was destined to do during the next few weeks) from point to point up and down the scale between eighteen and thirty-five. She wore a spotted veil, and beneath it a pince-nez, the lenses of which did something to temper the immense amount of humorous meaning which lurked in her gaze. When her pale prominent eyes met Campbell's, it seemed to the young man that they were full of eagerness to add something at his expense to the stores of information they had already garnered up. They chilled him with misgivings; there was more comfort to be found in her sister's shifting red-brown glances.

"Hanover is a long way to go for lessons," he observed, forcing himself to be conversational. "I used to go myself about once a week, when I first came to Schloss Altenau, for tobacco, or note-paper, or to get my hair cut. But later on I did without, or contented myself with what Hamelin, or even the village, could offer me."

"Nannie and I," said the young girl, "meant to stay only a week at Altenau, on our way to Hanover, where we were going to pass the winter; but the Castle is just too lovely for anything," she added softly. She raised her eyelids the least little bit as she looked at him, and such a warm and friendly gaze shot out that Campbell was suddenly thrilled. Was she pretty, after all? He glanced at Nannie; she, at least, was indubitably plain. "It's the very first time we've ever stayed in a castle," Lulie went on;

"and we're going to remain right along now, until we go home in the spring. Just imagine living in a house with a real moat, and a drawbridge, and a Rittersaal, and suits of armour that have been actually worn in battle! And oh, that delightful iron collar and chain! You remember it, Mr. Campbell? It hangs right close to the gateway on the court-yard side. And you know, in old days, the Ritterhausens used it for the punishment of their serfs. There are horrible stories connected with it. Mr. Mayne can tell you them. But just think of being chained up there like a dog! So wonderfully picturesque."

"For the spectator perhaps," said Campbell, smiling. "I doubt if the victim appreciated the picturesque aspect of the case."

With this Lulie disagreed. "Oh, I think he must have been interested," she said. "It must have made him feel so absolutely part and parcel of the Middle Ages. I persuaded Mr. Mayne to fix the collar round my neck the other day; and though it was very uncomfortable, and I had to stand on tiptoe, it seemed to me that all at once the court-yard was filled with knights in armour, and crusaders, and palmers, and things; and there were flags flying and trumpets sounding; and all the dead and gone Ritterhausens had come down from their picture-frames, and were walking about in brocaded gowns and lace ruffles."

"It seemed to require a good deal of persuasion to get Mr. Mayne to unfix the collar again," said the little sister. "How at last did you manage it?"

But Lulie replied irrelevantly: "And the Ritterhausens are such perfectly lovely people, aren't they, Mr. Campbell? The old Baron is a perfect dear. He has such a grand manner. When he kisses my hand I feel nothing less than a princess. And the Baroness is such a funny, busy, delicious little round ball of a thing. And she's always playing bagatelle, isn't she? Or else cutting up skeins of wool for carpet-making." She meditated a moment. "Some people always *are* cutting things up in order to join them together again," she announced, in her fresh drawling little voice.

"And some people cut things up, and leave other people to do all the reparation," commented the little sister, enigmatically.

And all this time the carriage had been rattling over the cobble-paved streets of the quaint mediæval town, where the houses stand so near together that you may shake hands with your opposite neighbour; where allegorical figures, strange birds and beasts, are carved and painted over the windows and doors; and where to every distant sound you lean your ear to catch the fairy music of the Pied Piper, and at every street corner you look to see his tatterdemalion form with the frolicking children at his heels.

Then the Weser bridge was crossed, beneath which the ice-floes jostled and ground themselves together, as they forced a way down the river; and the carriage was rolling smoothly along country roads, between vacant snow-decked fields.

Campbell's embarrassment was wearing off. Now that he was getting accustomed to the girls, he found neither of them awe-inspiring. The red-haired one had a simple child-like manner that was charming. Her strange little face, with its piquant irregularity of line, its warmth of colour, began to please him. What though her hair was red, the uncurled wisp which strayed across her white forehead was soft and alluring; he could see soft masses of it tucked up beneath her hat-brim as she turned her head. When she suddenly lifted her red-brown lashes, those queer eyes of hers had a velvety softness too. Decidedly, she struck him as being pretty—in a peculiar way. He felt an immense accession of interest in her. It seemed to him that he was the discoverer of her possibilities. He did not doubt that the rest of the world called her plain, or at least odd-looking. He, at first, had only seen the freckles on her nose, her oblique-set eyes. He wondered what she thought of herself, and how she appeared to Nannie. Probably as a very commonplace little girl; sisters stand too close to see each other's qualities. She was too young to have had much opportunity of hearing flattering truths from strangers; and, besides, the ordinary stranger would see nothing in her to call for flattering truths. Her charm was something subtle, out-of-the-common, in defiance of all known rules of beauty. Campbell saw superiority in himself for recognising it, for formulating it; and he was not displeased to be aware that it would always remain caviare to the multitude.

II

"I'm jolly glad to have you back," Mayne said, that same evening, when, the rest of the boarders having retired to their rooms, he and Campbell were lingering over the hall-fire for a talk and smoke. "I've missed you awfully, old chap, and the good times we used to have here. I've often meant to write to you, but you know how one shoves off letter-writing day after day, till at last one is too ashamed of one's indolence to write at all. But tell me—you had a pleasant drive from Hamelin? What do you think of our young ladies?"

"Those American girls? But they're charming," said Campbell, with enthusiasm. "The red-haired one is particularly charming."

At this Mayne laughed so oddly that Campbell questioned him in surprise. "Isn't she charming?"

"My dear chap," said Mayne, "the red-haired one, as you call her, is the most remarkably charming young person I've ever met or read of. We've had a good many American girls here before now—you remember the good old Clamp family, of course?—they were here in your time, I think?—but we've never had anything like this Miss Lulie Thayer. She is something altogether unique."

Campbell was struck with the name. "Lulie—Lulie Thayer," he repeated. "How pretty it is." And, full of his great discovery, he felt he must confide it to Mayne, at least. "Do you know," he went on, "*she* is really very pretty too? I didn't think so at first, but after a bit I discovered that she is positively quite pretty—in an odd sort of way."

Mayne laughed again. "Pretty, pretty!" he echoed in derision. "Why, *lieber Gott im Himmel*, where are your eyes? Pretty! The girl is beautiful, gorgeously beautiful; every trait, every tint, is in complete, in absolute harmony with the whole. But the truth is, of course, we've all grown accustomed to the obvious, the commonplace; to violent contrasts; blue eyes, black eyebrows, yellow hair; the things that shout for recognition. You speak of Miss Thayer's hair as red. What other colour would you have, with that warm creamy skin? And then, what a red it is! It looks as though it had been steeped in red wine."

"Ah, what a good description," said Campbell, appreciatively. "That's just it—steeped in red wine."

"And yet it's not so much her beauty," Mayne continued. "After all, one has met beautiful women before now. It's her wonderful generosity, her complaisance. She doesn't keep her good things to herself. She doesn't condemn you to admire from a distance."

"How do you mean?" Campbell asked, surprised again.

"Why, she's the most egregious little flirt I've ever met. And yet, she's not exactly a flirt, either. I mean she doesn't flirt in the ordinary way. She doesn't talk much, or laugh, or apparently make the least claims on masculine attention. And so all the women like her. I don't believe there's one, except my wife, who has an inkling as to her true character. The Baroness, as you know, never observes anything. *Seigneur Dieu!* if she knew the things I could tell her about Miss Lulie! For I've had opportunities of studying her. You see, I'm a married man, and not in my first youth; out of the running altogether. The looker-on gets the best view of the game. But you, who are young and charming and already famous—we've had your book here, by the bye, and there's good stuff in it—you're going to have no end of pleasant experiences. I can see she means to add you to her ninety-and-nine other spoils; I saw it from the way she looked at you at dinner. She always begins with those velvety red-brown glances. She began that way with March and Prendergast and Willie Anson, and all the men we've had here since her arrival. The next thing she'll do will be to press your hand under the tablecloth."

"Oh, come, Mayne; you're joking," cried Campbell, a little brusquely. He thought such jokes in bad taste. He had a high ideal of Woman, an immense respect for her; he could not endure to hear her belittled even in jest. "Miss Thayer is refined and charming. No girl of her class would do such things."

"What is her class? Who knows anything about her? All we know is that she and her uncanny little friend—her little sister, as she calls her, though they're no more sisters than you and I are—they're not even related—all we know is that she and Miss Dodge (that's the little sister's name) arrived here one memorable day last October from the Kronprinz Hotel at Waldeck-Pyrmont. By the bye, it was the Clamps, I believe, who told her of the Castle—hotel acquaintances—you know how travelling Americans always cotton to each other. And we've picked up a few little biographical notes from her and Miss Dodge since. *Zum Beispiel*, she's got a rich father somewhere away back in Michigan, who supplies her with all the money she wants. And she's been travelling about since last May: Paris, Vienna, the Rhine, Düsseldorf, and so on here. She must have had some rich experiences, by Jove. For she's done everything. Cycled in Paris: you should see her in her cycling costume; she wears it when the Baron takes her out shooting—she's an admirable shot, by the way, an accomplishment learned, I suppose, from some American cow-boy. Then in Berlin she did a month's hospital nursing; and now she's studying the higher branches of the Terpsichorean art. You know she was in Hanover to-day. Did she tell you what she went for?"

"To take a singing lesson," said Campbell, remembering the reason she had given.

"A singing lesson! Do you sing with your legs? A dancing lesson, *mein lieber*. A dancing lesson from the ballet-master of the Hof Theater. She could deposit a kiss on your forehead with her foot, I don't doubt. I wonder if she can do the *grand écart* yet." And when Campbell, in astonishment, wondered why on earth she should wish to do such things, "Oh, to extend her opportunities," Mayne explained, "and to acquire fresh sensations. She's an adventuress. Yes, an adventuress, but an end-of-the-century one. She doesn't travel for profit, but for pleasure. She has no desire to swindle her neighbour of dollars, but to amuse herself at his expense. And she's clever; she's read a good deal; she knows how to apply her reading to practical life. Thus, she's learned from Herrick not to be coy; and from Shakespeare that sweet-and-twenty is the time for kissing and being kissed. She honours her masters in the observance. She was not in the least abashed when, one day, I suddenly came upon her teaching that damned idiot, young Anson, two new ways of kissing."

Campbell's impressions of the girl were readjusting themselves completely, but for the moment he was unconscious of the change. He only knew that he was partly angry, partly incredulous, and inclined to believe that Mayne was chaffing him.

"But Miss Dodge," he objected, "the little sister, she is older; old enough to look after her friend. Surely she could not allow a young girl placed in her charge to behave in such a way——"

"Oh, that little Dodge girl," said Mayne contemptuously; "Miss Thayer pays the whole shot, I understand, and Miss Dodge plays gooseberry, sheep-dog, jackal, what you will. She finds her reward in the other's cast-off finery. The silk blouse she was wearing to-night, I've good reason for remembering, belonged to Miss Lulie. For, during a brief season, I must tell you, my young lady had the caprice to show attentions to your humble servant. I suppose my being a married man lent me a factitious fascination. But I didn't see it. That kind of girl doesn't appeal to me. So she employed Miss Dodge to do a little active canvassing. It was really too funny; I was coming in one day after a walk in the woods; my wife was trimming bonnets, or had neuralgia, or something. Anyhow, I was alone, and Miss Dodge contrived to waylay me in the middle of the court-yard. 'Don't you find it vurry dull walking all by yourself?' she asked me; and then blinking up in her strange little short-sighted way—she's really the weirdest little creature—'Why don't you make love to Lulie?' she said; 'you'd find her vurry charming.' It took me a minute or two to recover presence of mind enough to ask her whether Miss Thayer had commissioned her to tell me so. She looked at me with that cryptic smile of hers; 'She'd like you to do so, I'm sure,' she finally remarked, and pirouetted away. Though it didn't come off, owing to my bashfulness, it was then that Miss Dodge appropriated the silk bodice; and Providence, taking pity on Miss Thayer's forced inactivity, sent along March, a young fellow reading for the army, with whom she had great doings. She fooled him to the top of his bent; sat on his knee; gave him a lock of her hair, which, having no scissors handy, she burned off with a cigarette taken from his mouth; and got him to offer her marriage. Then she turned round and laughed in his face, and took up with a Dr. Weber, a cousin of the Baron's, under the other man's very eyes. You never saw anything like the unblushing coolness with which she would permit March to catch her in Weber's arms."

"Come," Campbell protested, "aren't you drawing it rather strong?"

"On the contrary, I'm drawing it mild, as you'll discover presently for yourself; and then you'll thank me for forewarning you. For she makes love—desperate love, mind you—to every man she meets. And goodness knows how many she hasn't met, in the course of her career, which began presumably at the age of ten, in some 'Amur'can' hotel or watering-place. Look at this." Mayne fetched an alpenstock from a corner of the hall; it was decorated with a long succession of names, which, ribbon-like, were twisted round and round it, carved in the wood. "Read them," insisted Mayne, putting the stick in Campbell's hands. "You'll see they're not the names of the peaks she has climbed, or the towns she has passed through; they're the names of the men she has fooled. And there's room for more; there's still a good deal of space, as you see. There's room for yours."

Campbell glanced down the alpenstock—reading here a name, there an initial, or just a date—and jerked it impatiently from him on to a couch. He wished with all his heart that Mayne would stop, would talk of something else, would let him get away. The young girl had interested him so much; he had felt himself so drawn towards her; he had thought her so fresh, so innocent. But Mayne, on the contrary, was warming to his subject, was enchanted to have some one to listen to his stories, to discuss his theories, to share his cynical amusement.

"I don't think, mind you," he said, "that she is a bit interested herself in the men she flirts with. I don't think she gets any of the usual sensations from it, you know. I think she just does it for devilry, for a laugh. Sometimes I wonder whether she does it with an idea of retribution. Perhaps some woman she was fond of, perhaps her mother even—who knows?—was badly treated at the hands of a man. Perhaps this girl has constituted herself the Nemesis for her sex, and goes about seeing how many masculine hearts she can break by way of revenge. Or can it be that she is simply the newest development of the New Woman—she who in England preaches and bores you, and in America practises and pleases? Yes, I believe she's the American edition, and so new that she hasn't yet found her way into fiction. She's the pioneer of the army coming out of the West, that's going to destroy the existing scheme of things and rebuild it nearer to the heart's desire."

"Oh, damn it all, Mayne," cried Campbell, rising abruptly, "why not say at once that she's a wanton, and have done with it? Who wants to hear your rotten theories?" And he lighted his candle without another word, and went off to bed.

III

It was four o'clock, and the Baron's boarders were drinking their afternoon coffee, drawn up in a circle round the hall fire. All but Campbell, who had carried his cup away to a side-table, and, with a book open before him, appeared to be reading assiduously. In reality he could not follow a line of what he read; he could not keep his thoughts from Miss Thayer. What Mayne had told him was germinating in his mind. Knowing his friend as he did, he could not on reflection doubt his word. In spite of much superficial cynicism, Mayne was incapable of speaking lightly of any young girl without good cause. It now seemed to Campbell that, instead of exaggerating the case, Mayne had probably understated it. The girl repelled him to-day as much as she had charmed him yesterday. He asked himself with horror, what had she not already known, seen, permitted? When now and again his eyes travelled over, perforce, to where she sat, her red head leaning against Miss Dodge's knee, seeming to attract and concentrate all the glow of the fire, his forehead set itself in frowns, and he returned with an increased sense of irritation to his book.

"I'm just sizzling up, Nannie," Miss Thayer presently complained, in her child-like, drawling little way; "this fire is too hot for anything." She rose and shook straight her loose tea-gown, a marvellous garment created in Paris, which would have accused a duchess of wilful extravagance. She stood smiling round a moment, pulling on and off with her right hand the big diamond ring which decorated the left. At the sound of her voice Campbell had looked up; now his cold unfriendly eyes encountered hers. He glanced rapidly past her, then back to his book. But she, undeterred, with a charming sinuous movement and a frou-frou of trailing silks, crossed over towards him. She slipped into an empty chair next his.

"I'm going to do you the honour of sitting beside you, Mr. Campbell," she said sweetly.

"It's an honour I've done nothing whatever to merit," he answered, without looking at her, and turned a page.

"The right retort," she approved; "but you might have said it a little more cordially."

"I don't feel cordial."

"But why not? What has happened? Yesterday you were so nice."

"Ah, a good deal of water has run under the bridge since yesterday."

"But still the river remains as full," she told him, smiling, "and still the sky is as blue. The thermometer has even risen six degrees. Out-of-doors, to-day, I could feel the spring-time in the air. You, too, love the spring, don't you? I know that from your books. And I wanted to tell you, I think your books perfectly lovely. I know them, most all. I've read them away home. They're very much thought of in America. Only last night I was saying to Nannie how glad I am to have met you, for I think we're going to be great friends; aren't we, Mr. Campbell? At least, I hope so, for you can do me so much good, if you will. Your books always make me feel real good; but you yourself can help me much more."

She looked up at him with one of her warm, narrow red-brown glances, which yesterday would have thrilled his blood, and to-day merely stirred it to anger.

"You over-estimate my abilities," he said coldly; "and on the whole, I fear you will find writers a very disappointing race. You see, they put their best into their books. So, not to disillusion you too rapidly"—he rose—"will you excuse me? I have some work to do." And he left her sitting there alone.

But he did no work when he got to his room. Whether Lulie Thayer was actually present or not, it seemed that her influence was equally disturbing to him. His mind was full of her: of her singular eyes, her quaint intonation, her sweet seductive praise. Yesterday such praise would have been delightful to him: what young author is proof against appreciation of his books? To-day, Campbell simply told himself that she laid the butter on too thick; that it was in some analogous manner she had flattered up March, Anson, and all the rest of the men that Mayne had spoken of. He supposed it was the first step in the process by which he was to be fooled, twisted round her finger, added to the list of victims who strewed her conquering path. He had a special fear of being fooled. For beneath a somewhat supercilious exterior, the dominant note of his character was timidity, distrust of his own merits; and he knew he was single-minded—one-idea'd almost; if he were to let himself go, to get to care very much for a woman, for such a girl as this girl, for instance, he would lose himself completely, be at her mercy absolutely. Fortunately, Mayne had let him know her character: he could feel nothing but dislike for her—disgust, even; and yet he was conscious how pleasant it would be to believe in her innocence, in her candour. For she was so adorably pretty: her flower-like beauty grew upon him; her head, drooping a little on one side when she looked up, was so like a flower bent by its own weight. The texture of her cheeks, her lips, were delicious as the petals of a flower. He found he could recall with perfect accuracy every detail of her appearance: the manner in which the red hair grew round her temples ; how it was loosely and gracefully fastened up behind with just a single tortoise-shell pin. He recalled the suspicion of a dimple which shadowed itself in her cheek when she spoke, and deepened into a delicious reality every time she smiled. He remembered her throat ; her hands, of a beautiful whiteness, with pink palms and pointed fingers. It was impossible to write. He speculated long on the ring she wore on her engaged finger. He mentioned this ring to Mayne the next time he saw him.

"Engaged? very much so I should say. Has got a *fiancé* in every capital of Europe probably. But the ring-man is the *fiancé en titre*. He writes to her by every mail, and is tremendously in love with her. She shows me his letters. When she's had her fling, I suppose, she'll go back and marry him. That's what these little American girls do, I'm told ; sow their wild oats here with us, and settle down into *bonnes ménagères* over yonder. Meanwhile, are you having any fun with her? Aha, she presses your hand? The 'gesegnete Mahlzeit' business after dinner is an excellent institution, isn't it? She'll tell you how much she loves you soon ; that's the next move in the game."

But so far she had done none of these things, for Campbell gave her no opportunities. He was guarded in the extreme, ungenial ; avoiding her even at the cost of civility. Sometimes he was downright rude. That especially occurred when he felt himself inclined to yield to her advances. For she made him all sorts of silent advances, speaking with her eyes, her sad little mouth, her beseeching attitude. And then one evening she went further still. It occurred after dinner in the little green drawing-room. The rest of the company were gathered together in the big drawing-room beyond. The small room has deep embrasures to the windows. Each embrasure holds two old faded green velvet sofas in black oaken frames, and an oaken oblong table stands between them. Campbell had flung himself down on one of these sofas in the corner nearest the window. Miss Thayer, passing through the room, saw him, and sat down opposite. She leaned her elbows on the table, the laces of her sleeves falling away from her round white arms, and clasped her hands.

"Mr. Campbell, tell me what have I done? How have I vexed you? You have hardly spoken two words to me all day. You always try to avoid me." And when he began to utter evasive banalities, she stopped him with an imploring "Don't! I love you. You know I love you. I love you so much I can't bear you to put me off with mere phrases."

Campbell admired the well-simulated passion in her voice, remembered Mayne's prediction, and laughed aloud.

"Oh, you may laugh," she said, "but I am serious. I love you, I love you with my whole soul." She slipped round the end of the table, and came close beside him. His first impulse was to rise; then he resigned himself to stay. But it was not so much resignation that was required, as self-mastery, cool-headedness. Her close proximity, her fragrance, those wonderful eyes raised so beseechingly to his, made his heart beat.

"Why are you so cold?" she said. "I love you so; can't you love me a little too?"

"My dear young lady," said Campbell, gently repelling her, "what do you take me for? A foolish boy like your friends Anson and March? What you are saying is monstrous, preposterous. Ten days ago you'd never even seen me."

"What has length of time to do with it?" she said. "I loved you at first sight."

"I wonder," he observed judicially, and again gently removed her hand from his, "to how many men you have not already said the same thing."

"I've never meant it before," she said quite earnestly, and nestled closer to him, and kissed the breast of his coat, and held her mouth up towards his. But he kept his chin resolutely high, and looked over her head.

"How many men have you not already kissed, even since you've been here?"

"But there've not been many here to kiss!" she exclaimed naïvely.

"Well, there was March; you kissed him?"

"No, I'm quite sure I didn't."

"And young Anson; what about him? Ah, you don't answer! And then the other fellow—what's his name—Prendergast—you've kissed him?"

"But, after all, what is there in a kiss?" she cried ingenuously. "It means nothing, absolutely nothing. Why, one has to kiss all sorts of people one doesn't care about."

Campbell remembered how Mayne had said she had probably known strange kisses since the age of ten; and a wave of anger with her, of righteous indignation, rose within him.

"To me," said he, "to all right-thinking people, a young girl's kisses are something pure, something sacred, not to be offered indiscriminately to every fellow she meets. Ah, you don't know what you have lost! You have seen a fruit that has been handled, that has lost its bloom? You have seen primroses, spring flowers gathered and thrown away in the dust? And who enjoys the one, or picks up the others? And this is what you remind me of—only you have deliberately, of your own perverse will, tarnished your beauty, and thrown away all the modesty, the reticence, the delicacy, which make a young girl so infinitely dear. You revolt me, you disgust me. I want nothing from you, but to be let alone. Kindly take your hands away, and let me go."

He roughly shook her off and got up, then felt a moment's curiosity to see how she would take the repulse.

Miss Thayer never blushed: had never, he imagined, in her life done so. No faintest trace of colour now stained the warm pallor of her rose-leaf skin; but her eyes filled up with tears; two drops gathered on the under-lashes, grew large, trembled an instant, and then rolled unchecked down her cheeks. Those tears somehow put him in the wrong, and he felt he had behaved brutally to her for the rest of the night.

He began to find excuses for her: after all, she meant no harm: it was her up-bringing, her *genre:* it was a *genre* he loathed; but perhaps he need not have spoken so harshly to her. He thought he would find a more friendly word for her next morning; and he loitered about the Mahlsaal, where the boarders come in to breakfast as in an hotel, just when it suits them, till past eleven; but the girl never turned up. Then, when he was almost tired of waiting, Miss Dodge put in an appearance, in a flannel wrapper, and her front hair twisted up in steel pins.

Campbell judged Miss Dodge with even more severity than he did Miss Thayer; there was nothing in this weird little creature's appearance to temper justice with mercy. It was with difficulty that he brought himself to inquire after her friend.

"Lulie is sick this morning," she told him. "I've come down to order her some broth. She couldn't sleep any last night, because of your unkindness to her. She's vurry, vurry unhappy about it."

"Yes, I'm sorry for what I said. I had no right to speak so strongly, I suppose. But I spoke strongly because I feel strongly.

However, there's no reason why my bad manners should make her unhappy."

"Oh, yes, there's vurry good reason," said Miss Dodge. "She's vurry much in love with you."

Campbell looked at the speaker long and earnestly to try and read her mind; but the prominent blinking eyes, the cryptic physiognomy, told him nothing.

"Look here," he said brusquely, "what's your object in trying to fool me like this? I know all about your friend. Mayne has told me. She has cried 'Wolf' too often before to expect to be believed now."

"But after all," argued Miss Dodge, blinking more than ever behind her glasses, "the wolf did really come at last, you know; didn't he? Lulie is really in love this time. We've all made mistakes in our lives, haven't we? But that's no reason for not being right at last. And Lulie has cried herself sick."

Campbell was a little shaken. He went and repeated the conversation to Mayne, who laughed derisively.

"Capital, capital!" he cried; "excellently contrived. It quite supports my latest theory about our young friend. She's an actress, a born comédienne. She acts always, and to every one: to you, to me, to the Ritterhausens, to the Dodge girl—even to herself when she is quite alone. And she has a great respect for her art; she'll carry out her rôle, *côute que côute*, to the bitter end. She chooses to pose as in love with you; you don't respond; the part now requires that she should sicken and pine. Consequently she takes to her bed, and sends her confidante to tell you so. Oh, it's colossal, it's *famos*."

IV

"If you can't really love me," said Lulie Thayer—"and I know I've been a bad girl and don't deserve that you should—at least, will you allow me to go on loving you?"

She walked by Campbell's side, through the solitary uncared-for park of Schloss Altenau. It was three weeks later in the year, and the spring feeling in the air stirred the blood. All round were signs and tokens of spring: in the busy gaiety of bird and insect life; in the purple flower-tufts which thickened the boughs of the ash trees; in the young green things pushing up pointed heads from amidst last season's dead leaves and grasses. The snow-wreathes, that had for so long decorated the distant hills, were shrinking perceptibly away beneath the strong March sunshine.

There was every invitation to spend one's time out of doors, and Campbell passed long mornings in the park, or wandering through the woods or the surrounding villages. Miss Thayer often accompanied him. He never invited her to do so, but when she offered him her company, he could not, or at least did not, refuse it.

"May I love you? Say," she entreated.

"'Wenn ich Dich liebe, was geht 's Dich an?'" he quoted lightly. "Oh, no, it's nothing to me, of course. Only don't expect me to believe you—that's all."

This disbelief of his was the recurring decimal of their conversation. No matter on what subject they began, they always ended thus. And the more sceptical he showed himself, the more eager she became. She exhausted herself in endeavours to convince him.

They had reached the corner in the park where the road to the castle turns off at right angles from the road to Dürrendorf. The ground rises gently on the park-side to within three feet of the top of the wall, although on the other side there is a drop of at least twenty feet. The broad wall-top makes a convenient seat. Campbell and the girl sat down on it. At his last words she wrung her hands together in her lap.

"But how can you disbelieve me?" she cried, "when I tell you I love you, I adore you? When I swear it to you? And can't you see for yourself? Why, every one at the Castle sees it."

"Yes, you afford the Castle a good deal of unnecessary amusement. And that shows you don't understand what love really is. Real love is full of delicacy, of reticences, and would feel itself profaned if it became the jest of the servants' hall."

"I think it's not so much my love for you," said Lulie gently, "as your rejection of it, which has made me talked about."

"No; isn't it rather on account of the favours you've lavished on all my predecessors?"

She sprang from the wall to her feet, and walked up and down in agitation.

"But after all, surely, mistakes of that sort are not to be counted against us? I did really think I was in love with Mr. March. Willie Anson doesn't count. He's an American too, and he understands things. Besides, he is only a boy. And how could I know I should love you before I had met you? And how can I help loving you now I have? You're so different from other men. You're good. You're honourable, you treat women with respect. Oh, I do love you so, I do love you! Ask Nannie if I don't."

The way in which Campbell shrugged his shoulders clearly expressed the amount of reliance he would place on any testimony from Miss Dodge. He could not forget her "Why don't you make love to Lulie?" addressed to a married man. Such a want of principle argued an equal want of truth.

Lulie seemed on the brink of weeping.

"Oh, I wish I were dead," she struggled to say; "life's impossible if you won't believe me. I don't ask you to love me any longer. I know I've been a bad girl, and I don't deserve that you should; but if you won't believe that I love you, I don't want to live any longer."

Campbell confessed to himself that she acted admirably, but that the damnable iteration of the one idea became monotonous. He sought a change of subject. "Look there," he said, "close by the wall, what's that jolly little blue flower? It's the first I've seen this year."

He pointed to where a periwinkle grew at the base of the wall, lifting its bright petals gaily from out its dark glossy leaves.

Lulie, all smiles again, picked it with child-like pleasure. "Oh, if that's the first you've seen," she cried, "you can take a wish. Only you mustn't speak until some one asks you a question."

She began to fasten it in his coat. "It's just as blue as your eyes," she said. "You have such blue and boyish eyes, you know. Stop, stop, that's not a question," and seeing that he was about to speak, she laid her finger across his mouth. "You'll spoil the charm."

She stepped back, folded her arms, and seemed to dedicate herself to eternal silence; then relenting suddenly:

"Do you believe me?" she entreated.

"What's become of your ring?" Campbell answered irrelevantly. He had noticed its absence from her finger while she had been fixing in the flower.

"Oh, my engagement's broken."

Campbell asked how the fiancé would like that.

"Oh, he won't mind. He knows I only got engaged because he worried so. And it was always understood between us, that I was to be free if I ever met any one I liked better."

Campbell asked her what sort of fellow this accommodating fiancé was.

"Oh, he's all right. And he's very good too. But he's not a bit clever, and don't let us talk about him. He makes me tired."

"But you're wrong," Campbell told her, "to throw away a good, a sincere affection. If you really want to reform and turn over a new leaf, as you are always telling me, I should advise you to go home and marry him."

"What, when I'm in love with you!" she cried reproachfully. "Would that be right?"

"It's going to rain," said Campbell. "Didn't you feel a drop just then? And it's getting near lunch-time. Shall we go in?"

Their shortest way led through the little cemetery in which the dead and gone Ritterhausens lay at peace, in the shadow of their sometime home.

"When I die the Baron has promised I shall be buried here," said Lulie pensively; "just here, next to his first wife. Don't you think it would be lovely to be buried in a beautiful, peaceful baronial graveyard instead of in some horrid crowded city cemetery?"

Mayne met them as they entered the hall. He noticed the flower in his friend's coat. "Ah, my dear chap, been treading the periwinkle path of dalliance, I see? How many desirable young men have I not witnessed, led down the same broad way by the same seductive lady! Always the same thing, nothing changed, but the flower, according to the season."

When Campbell reached his room and changed his coat, he threw the flower away into his stove.

Had it not been for Mayne, Miss Thayer might have triumphed after all; might have convinced Campbell of her passion, or have added another victim to her long list. But Mayne had set himself as determinedly to spoil her game as she was bent on winning it. He had always the cynical word, the apt reminiscence ready, whenever he saw signs on Campbell's part of yielding. He was very fond of Campbell. He did not wish to see him fall a prey to the wiles of this little American syren. He had watched her conduct in the past with a dozen different men; he genuinely believed she was only acting now.

Campbell, for his part, began to feel a curious and growing irritation in the girl's presence. Yet he did not avoid it; he could not well avoid it, she followed him about so persistently; but his speech began to overflow with bitterness towards her. He said the cruellest things; then remembering them afterwards when alone, he blushed at his brutalities. But nothing he said ever altered her sweetness of temper or weakened the tenacity of her purpose. His rebuffs made her beautiful eyes run over with tears, but the harshest of them never elicited the least sign of resentment. There would have been something touching as well as comic in this dog-like forgiveness, which accepted everything as welcome at his hands, had he not been imbued with Mayne's conviction that it was all an admirable piece of acting. When for a moment he forgot the histrionic theory, then invariably there would come a chance word in her conversation which would fill him with cold rage. They would be talking of books, travels, sport, what not, and she would drop a reference to this man or to that. So-and-so had taken her to

Bullier's, she had learned skating with this other. She was a capital shot, Hiram P. Ladd had taught her; and he got glimpses of long vistas of amourettes played in every State in America, and in every country of Europe, since the very beginning, when, as a mere child, elderly men, friends of her father's, had held her on their knee and fed her with sweetmeats and kisses. It was sickening to think of; it was pitiable. So much youth and beauty tarnished: the possibility for so much good thrown away. For if one could only blot out her record, forget it, accept her for what she chose to appear, a more endearing companion no man could desire.

V

It was a wet afternoon. Mayne had accompanied his wife and the Baroness into Hamelin. "To take up a servant's character, and expostulate with a recalcitrant dressmaker," he explained to Campbell, and wondered what women would do to fill up their days, were it not for the perennial villanies of dressmakers and domestic servants. He himself was going to look in at the English Club; wouldn't Campbell come too? There was a fourth seat in the carriage. But Campbell was in no social mood; he felt his temper going all to pieces; a quarter of an hour of Mrs. Mayne's society would have brought on an explosion. He felt he must be alone; yet when he had read for half an hour in his room he wondered vaguely what Lulie was doing; he had not seen her since luncheon. She always gave him her society when he could very well dispense with it, but on a wet day like this, when a little conversation would be tolerable, of course she stayed away. Then there came down the long Rittersaal the tapping of high heels and a well-known knock at his door.

"Am I disturbing you?" she asked; and his mood was so capricious that, now she was standing there on his threshold, he thought he was annoyed at it. "It's so dull," she said, persuasively: "Nannie's got a sick headache, and I daren't go downstairs, or the Baron will annex me to play Halma. He always wants to play Halma on wet days."

"And what do you want to do?" said Campbell, leaning against the doorpost, and letting his eyes rest on the strange piquant face in its setting of red hair.

"To be with you, of course."

"Well," said he, coming out and closing the door, "I'm at your service. What next?"

"What would you like to do? Shall I fetch over my pistols, and we'll practise with them? You've no notion how well I can shoot. We couldn't hurt anything here, could we?"

The Rittersaal is an immense room occupying all the space on the first floor that the hall and four drawing-rooms do on the floor below. Wooden pillars support the ceiling, and divide the room lengthwise into three parts. Down the centre are long tables, used for ceremonial banquets. Six windows look into the courtyard, and six out over the open country. The centre pane of each window is emblazoned with a Ritterhausen shield. The sills are broad and low, and cushioned in faded velvet. Between the windows hang family portraits, and a fine stone-sculptured sixteenth-century fireplace and overmantel at one end of the *Saal* faces a magnificent black carved buffet at the other. Lulie, bundling up her duchess tea-gown over one arm, danced off down the long room in very unduchess-like fashion to fetch the case. It was a charming little box of cedar-wood and mother-o'-pearl, lined with violet velvet; and two tiny revolvers lay inside, hardly more than six inches long, with silver engraved handles.

"I won them in a bet," she observed complacently, "with the Hon. Billie Thornton. He's an Englishman, you know, the son of Lord Thornton. I knew him in Washington two years ago last fall. He bet I couldn't hit a three-cent piece at twenty feet, and I did. Aren't they perfectly sweet? Now, can't you contrive a target?"

Campbell went back to his room, drew out a rough diagram, and pasted it down on to a piece of stout cardboard. Then this was fixed up by means of a penknife driven into the wood against one of the pillars, and Campbell, with his walking-stick laid down six successive times, measured off the distance required, and set a chalk mark across the floor. Lulie took the first shot. She held the little weapon out at arm's length—pulled the trigger. There was the sharp report, and when Campbell went up to examine results, he found she had only missed the very centre by half an inch.

Lulie was exultant. "I don't seem to have got out of practice any," she remarked. "I'm so glad, for I used to be a very good shot. It was Hiram P. Ladd who taught me. He's the crack shot of Montana. What! you don't know Hiram P.? Why, I should have supposed every one must have heard of him. He had the next ranche to my Uncle Samuel's, where I used to go summers, and he made me do an hour's pistol practice every morning after bathing. It was he who taught me swimming too—in the river."

"Damnation," said Campbell under his breath, then shot in his turn, and shot wide. Lulie made another bull's-eye, and after that a white. She urged Campbell to continue, which he sullenly did, and again missed.

"You see I don't come up to your Hiram P. Ladd," he remarked savagely, and after a few more shots on either side he put the pistol down, and walked over to the window. He stood with one foot on the cushioned seat, staring out at the rain, and pulling at his moustache moodily.

Lulie followed him, nestled up to him, lifted the hand that hung passive by his side, put it round her waist, and held it there. Campbell, lost in thought, let it remain so for a second: then remembered how she had doubtless done this very same thing with other men in this very room. All her apparently spontaneous movements, he told himself, were but the oft-used pieces in the game she played so skilfully.

"Let go," he said, and flung himself down on the window-seat, looking up at her with darkening eyes.

She sat meekly in the other corner, and folded her offending hands in her lap.

"Do you know, your eyes are not a bit nice when you're cross;" she said, "they seem to become quite black."

He maintained a discouraging silence.

She looked over at him meditatively.

"I never cared a bit for Hiram P., if that's what you mean," she remarked presently.

"Do you suppose I care a button if you did?"

"Then why did you leave off shooting, and why won't you talk to me?"

He vouchsafed no reply.

Lulie spent some moments wrapped in thought. Then she sighed deeply, and recommenced on a note of pensive regret:

"Ah, if I'd only met you sooner in life, I should be a very different girl."

The freshness which her quaint, drawling enunciation lent to this time-dishonoured formula, made Campbell smile. Then remembering all its implications, his face set in frowns again.

Lulie continued her discourse. "You see," said she, "I never had any one to teach me what was right. My mother died when I was quite a child, and my father has always let me do exactly as I pleased, so long as I didn't bother him. Then I've never had a home, but have always lived around in hotels and places; all winter in New York or Washington, and summers out at Longbranch or Saratoga. It's true we own a house in Detroit on Lafayette Avenue, that we reckon as home, but we don't ever go there. It's a bad sort of life for a girl, isn't it?" she questioned, pleadingly.

His mind was at work. The loose threads of his angers, his irritations, his desires were knitting themselves together, weaving themselves into something overmastering and definite.

The young girl meanwhile was moving up towards him along the seat, for the effect which his sharpest rebuke produced on her never lasted more than four minutes. She now again possessed herself of his hand, and holding it between her own, began to caress it in child-like fashion, pulling the fingers apart and closing them again; spreading it, palm downwards on her lap, and laying her own little hand over it, to exemplify the differences between them. He let her be; he seemed unconscious of her proceedings.

"And then," she continued, "I've always known a lot of young fellows who've liked to take me round; and no one ever objected to my going with them, and so I went. And I liked it, and there wasn't any harm in it, just kissing and making believe, and nonsense. And I never really cared for one of them—I can see that now, when I compare them with you; when I compare what I felt for them, with what I feel for you. Oh, I do love you so much," she said; "don't you believe me?" She lifted his hand to her lips and covered it with kisses.

He pulled it roughly away, got up, walked to the table, came back again, stood looking at her with sombre eyes and dilating pupils.

"I do love you," she repeated, rising and advancing towards him.

"For God's sake, drop that damned rot," he cried with sudden fury. "It wearies me, do you hear? it sickens me. Love, love, my God, what do you know about it? Why, if you really loved me, really loved any man—if you had any conception of what the passion of love is, how beautiful, how fine, how sacred—the mere idea that you could not come to your lover fresh, pure, untouched, as a young girl should—that you had been handled, fondled, and God knows what besides, by this man and the other—would fill you with such horror for yourself, with such supreme disgust—you would feel yourself so unworthy, so polluted . . . that . . . that . . . by God! you would take up that pistol there, and blow your brains out!"

Lulie seemed to find the idea quite entertaining. She picked the pistol up from where it lay in the window, examined it with her pretty head drooping on one side, looked at it critically, and then sent one of her long, red-brown caressing glances up towards him.

"And suppose I were to," she asked lightly, "would you believe me then?"

"Oh, . . . well . . . then, perhaps; if you showed sufficient decency to kill yourself, perhaps I might," said he, with ironical laughter. His ebullition had relieved him; his nerves were calmed again. "But nothing short of that would ever make me."

With her little tragic air which seemed so like a smile disguised, she raised the weapon to the bosom of her gown. There came a sudden, sharp crack, a tiny smoke film. She stood an instant swaying slightly, smiling certainly, distinctly outlined against the background of rain-washed window, of grey falling rain, the top of her head cutting in two the Ritterhausen escutcheon. Then all at once there was nothing at all between him and the window; he saw the coat-of-arms entire; but a motionless, inert heap of plush and lace, and fallen wine-red hair, lay at his feet upon the floor.

"Child, child, what have you done?" he cried with anguish, and kneeling beside her, lifted her up, and looked into her face.

* * * * *

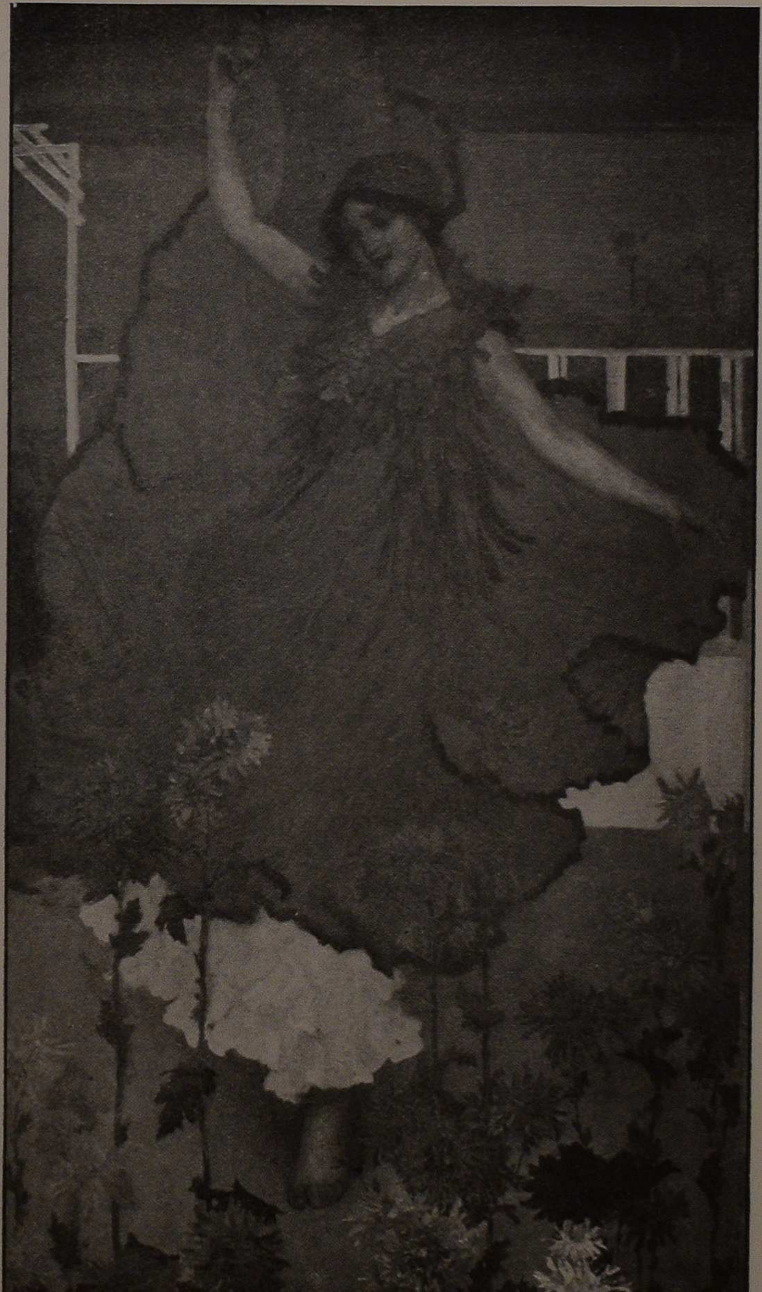
When from a distance of time and place Campbell was at last able to look back with some degree of calmness on the catastrophe, the element which stung him most keenly was this: he could never convince himself that Lulie had really loved him after all. And the only two persons who had known them both, and the circumstances of the case, sufficiently well to have resolved his doubts one way or the other, held diametrically opposite views.

"Well, just listen, then, and I'll tell you how it was," Miss Nannie Dodge had said to him impressively, the day before he left Schloss-Altenau for ever, "Lulie was tremendously, terribly in love with you. And when she found that you wouldn't care about her, she didn't want to live any more. As to the way in which it happened, you don't need to reproach yourself for that. She'd have done it, anyhow: if not then, why, later. But it's all the rest of your conduct to her that was so cruel. Your cold, complacent British unresponsiveness. I guess you'll never find another woman to love you as Lulie did. She was just the darlingest, the sweetest, the most loving girl in the world."

Mayne, on the other hand, summed it up in this way: "Of course, old chap, it's horrible to think of: horrible, horrible, horrible! I can't tell you how badly I feel about it. For she was a gorgeously beautiful creature. That red hair of hers! Good Lord! You won't come across such hair as that twice in a lifetime. But, believe me, she was only fooling with you. Once she had you in her hunting-noose, once her buccaneering instincts satisfied, and she'd have chucked you as she did all the rest. As to her death, I've got three theories—no, two—for the first is that she compassed it in a moment of genuine emotion, and that, I think, we may dismiss as quite untenable. The second is, that it arose from pure misadventure. You'd both been shooting, hadn't you? Well, she took up the pistol and pulled the trigger from mere mischief, and quite forgetting one barrel was still loaded. And the third is, it was just her histrionic sense of the fitness of things. The rôle she had played so long and so well now demanded a sensational finale in the centre of the stage. And it's the third theory I give the preference to. She was the most consummate little actress I ever saw."

The Chrysanthemum Girl

By R Anning Bell



Two Songs

By Rosamund Marriott-Watson

I—Requiescat

Bury me deep when I am dead,
  Far from the woods where sweet birds sing ;
Lap me in sullen stone and lead,
  Lest my poor dust should feel the spring.

Never a flower be near me set,
  Nor starry cup nor slender stem,
Anemone nor violet,
  Lest my poor dust remember them.

And you—wherever you may fare—
  Dearer than birds, or flowers, or dew—
Never, ah me, pass never there,
  Lest my poor dust should dream of you.

FAIR

II—The Isle of Voices

FAIR blows the wind to-day, fresh along the valleys,
Strange with the sounds and the scents of long ago ;
Sinks in the willow-grove ; shifts, and sighs, and rallies—
Whence, Wind ? and why, Wind ? and whither do you go ?

Why, Wind, and whence, Wind ?—yet well and well I know it—
Word from a lost world, a world across the sea ;
No compass guides there, never chart will show it,
Green grows the grave there that holds the heart of me.

Sunk lies my ship, and the cruel sea rejoices,
Sharp are the reefs where the hungry breakers fret—
Land so long lost to me—Youth, the Isle of Voices—
Call never more to me—I who must forget.

The Inner Ear

By Kenneth Grahame

To all of us journeymen in this great whirling London mill, it happens sooner or later that the clatter and roar of its ceaseless wheels—a thing at first portentous, terrifying, nay, not to be endured—becomes a part of our nature, with our clothes and our acquaintances; till at last the racket and din of a competitive striving humanity not only cease to impinge on the sense, but induce a certain callosity in the organ, while that more sensitive inner ear of ours, once almost as quick to record as his in the fairy tale, who lay and heard the grass-blades thrust and sprout, from lack of exercise drops back to the rudimentary stage. Hence it comes about, that when we are set down for a brief Sunday, far from the central roar, our first sensation is that of a stillness corporeal, positive, aggressive. The clamorous ocean of sound has ebbed to an infinite distance; in its place this other sea of fullest silence comes crawling up, whelming and flooding us, its crystalline waves lapping us round with a possessing encirclement as distinct as that of the other angry tide now passed away and done with. The very Spirit of Silence is sitting hand in hand with us, and her touch is a real warm thing.

And yet, may not our confidence be premature? Even as we bathe and steep our senses refreshingly in this new element, that inner ear of ours begins to revive and to record, one by one, the real facts of sound. The rooks are the first to assert themselves. All this time that we took to be so void of voice they have been volubly discussing every detail of domestic tree-life, as they rock and sway beside their nests in the elm-tops. To take in the varied chatter of rookdom would in itself be a full morning's occupation, from which the most complacent might rise humble and instructed. Unfortunately, their talk rarely tends to edification. The element of personality—the *argumentum ad hominem*—always crops up so fatally soon, that long ere a syllogism has been properly unrolled, the disputants have clinched on inadequate foothold, and flopped thence, dishevelled, into space. Somewhere hard by, their jackdaw cousins are narrating those smoking-room stories they are so fond of, with bursts of sardonic laughter at the close. For theology or the fine arts your jackdaw has little taste ; but give him something sporting and spicy, with a dash of the divorce court, and no Sunday morning can ever seem too long. At intervals the drum of the woodpecker rattles out from the heart of a copse ; while from every quarter birds are delivering each his special message to the great cheery-faced postman who is trudging his daily round overhead, carrying good tidings to the whole bird-belt that encircles the globe. To all these wild, natural calls of the wood, the farmyard behind us responds with its more cultivated clamour and cackle ; while the very atmosphere is resonant of its airy population, each of them blowing his own special trumpet. Silence, indeed ! why, as the inner ear awakes and develops, the solid bulk of this sound-in-stillness becomes in its turn overpowering, terrifying. Let the development only continue, one thinks, but a little longer, and the very rush of sap, the thrust and foison of germination, will join in the din, and go far to deafen us. One shrinks, in fancy, to a dwarf of meanest aims and pettiest account before this army of full-blooded, shouting soldiery, that possesses land and air so completely, with such an entire indifference, too, towards ourselves, our conceits, and our aspirations.

Here it is again, this lesson in modesty that nature is eternally dinning into us; and the completeness of one's isolation in the midst of all this sounding vitality cannot fail to strike home to the most self-centred. Indeed, it is evident that we are entirely superfluous here; nothing has any need of us, nor cares to know what we are interested in, nor what other people have been saying of us, nor whether we go or stay. Those rooks up above have their own society and occupations, and don't wish to share or impart them; and if haply a rook seems but an insignificant sort of being to you, be sure that you are quite as insignificant to the rook. Nay, probably more so; for while you at least allot the rook his special small niche in creation, it is more than doubtful whether he ever troubles to "place" you at all. He has weightier matters to occupy him, and so long as you refrain from active interference, the chances are that for him you simply don't exist.

But putting birds aside, as generally betraying in their startled, side-glancing mien some consciousness of a featherless unaccountable tribe that may have to be reckoned with at any moment, those other winged ones, the bees and their myriad cousins, simply insult one at every turn with their bourgeois narrowness of non-recognition. Nothing, indeed, could be more unlike the wary watchful marches of the bird-folk than the bustling self-centred devotion to business of these tiny brokers in Nature's busy mart. If you happen to get in their way, they jostle up against you, and serve you right; if you keep clear of the course, they proceed serenely without so much as a critical glance at your hat or your boots. Snubbed, hustled, and ignored, you feel, as you retire from the unequal contest, that the scurrying alarm of bird or beast is less hurtful to your self-respect than this complacent refusal of the insect to admit your very existence.

In sooth, we are at best poor fusionless incapable bodies; unstable of purpose, veering betwixt hot fits and chill, doubtful at times whether we have any business here at all. The least we can do is to make ourselves as small as possible, and interfere as little as may be with these lusty citizens, knowing just what they want to do, and doing it, at full work in a satisfactory world that is emphatically theirs, not ours.

The more one considers it, the humbler one gets. This pleasant, many-hued, fresh-smelling world of ours would be every whit as goodly and fair, were it to be rid at one stroke of us awkward aliens, staggering pilgrims through a land whose customs and courtesies we never entirely master, whose pleasant places we embellish and sweeten not at all. We, on the other hand, would be bereft indeed, were we to wake up one chill morning and find that all these practical capable cousins of ours had packed up and quitted in disgust, tired of trying to assimilate us, weary of our aimlessness, our brutalities, our ignorance of real life.

Our dull inner ear is at last fully awake, fully occupied. It must be a full three hundred yards away, that first brood of ducklings, fluffily proud of a three-days-old past; yet its shrill peep-peep reaches us as distinctly as the worry-worry of bees in the peach-blossom a foot from our head. Then suddenly—the clank of a stable-bucket on the tiles, the awakening of church-bells—humanity, with its grosser noises, is with us once more, and at the first sound of it, affrighted, the multitudinous drone of the under-life recedes, ebbs, vanishes; Silence, the nymph so shy and withdrawn, is by our side again, and slips her hand into ours.

Rosemary for Remembrance

By Henry Harland

I

I WONDER why I dreamed last night of Zabetta. It is years since she made her brief little transit through my life, and passed out of it utterly. It is years since the very recollection of her—which for years, like an accusing spirit, had haunted me too often—like a spirit was laid. It is long enough, in all conscience, since I have even thought of her, casually, for an instant. And then, last night, after a perfectly usual London day and evening, I went to bed and dreamed of her vividly. What had happened to bring her to my mind? Or is it simply that the god of dreams is a capricious god?

The influence of my dream, at any rate,—the bitter-sweet savour of it,—has pursued me through my waking hours. All day long to-day Zabetta has been my phantom guest. She has walked with me in the streets; she has waited at my elbow while I wrote or talked or read. Now, at tea-time, she is present with me by my study fireside, in the twilight. Her voice sounds faintly, plaintively, in my ears; her eyes gaze at me sadly from a pale reproachful face. . . . She bids me to the theatre of memory, where my youth is rehearsed before me in mimic-show. There was one—

no, there were two little scenes in which Zabetta played the part of leading lady.

II

I do not care to specify the year in which it happened; it happened a terrible number of years ago; it happened when I was twenty. I had passed the winter in Naples,—oh, it had been a golden winter!—and now April had come, and my last Neapolitan day. To-morrow I was to take ship for Marseilles, on the way to join my mother in Paris.

It was in the afternoon; and I was climbing one of those crooked staircase alleys that scale the hillsides behind the town, the Salita—is there, in Naples, a Salita Santa Margherita? I had lunched (for the last time!) at the Café d'Europe, and had then set forth upon a last haphazard ramble through the streets. It was tremulous spring weather, with blue skies, soft breezes, and a tender sun; the sort of weather that kindles perilous ardours even in the blood of middle age, and that turns the blood of youth to wildfire.

Women sat combing their hair, and singing, and gossiping, before the doorways of their pink and yellow houses; children sprawled, and laughed, and quarrelled in the dirt. Pifferari, in sheep-skins and sandles, followed by prowling, gaunt-limbed dogs, droned monotonous nasal melodies from their bagpipes. Priests picked their way gingerly over the muddy cobble stones, sleek, black-a-vised priests, with exaggerated hats, like Don Basilio's in the *Barbier*. Now and then one passed a fat brown monk; or a soldier; or a white-robed penitent, whose eyes glimmered uncannily from the peep-holes of the hood that hid his face; or a comely contadina, in her smart costume, with a pomegranate-blossom flaming behind her ear, and red lips that curved defiantly as she met the covetous glances wildfire-and-twenty no doubt bestowed upon her, —whereat, perhaps, wildfire-and-twenty halted and hesitated for an instant, debating whether to accept the challenge and turn and follow her. A flock of milk-purveying goats jangled their bells a few yards below me. Hawkers screamed their merchandise, fish, and vegetables, and early fruit—apricots, figs, green almonds. Brown-skinned, bare-legged boys shouted at long-suffering donkeys, and whacked their flanks with sticks. And everybody, more or less, importuned you for coppers. "Mossou, mossou ! Un piccolo soldo, per l'amor di Dio ! " The air was vibrant with southern human noises, and dense with southern human smells—amongst which, here and there, wandered strangely a lost waft of perfume from some neighbouring garden, a scent of jasmine or of orange flowers.

And then, suddenly, the salita took a turn, and broadened into a small piazza. At one hand there was a sheer terrace, dropping to tiled roofs twenty feet below ; and hence one got a splendid view, over the town, of the blue bay, with its shipping, and of Capri, all rose and purple in the distance, and of Vesuvius with its silver wreath of smoke. At the other hand loomed a vast, discoloured, pink-stuccoed palace, with grated windows, and a porte-cochère black as the mouth of a cavern ; and the upper stories of the palace were in ruins, and out of one corner of their crumbling walls a palm-tree grew. The third side of the piazza was inevitably occupied by a church, a little pearl-grey rococo edifice, with a bell, no deeper-toned than a common dinner-bell, which was now frantically ringing. About the doors of the church countless written notices were pasted, advertising indulgences ; beggars clung to the steps, like monster snails ; and the greasy leathern portière was constantly being drawn aside, to let someone enter or come out.

III

It was here that I met Zabetta.

The heavy portière swung open, and a young girl stepped from the darkness behind it into the sunshine.

I saw a soft face, with bright brown eyes ; a plain black frock, with a little green nosegay stuck in its belt ; and a small round scarlet hat.

A hideous old beggar woman stretched a claw towards this apparition, mumbling something. The apparition smiled, and sought in its pocket, and made the beggar woman the richer by a soldo.

I was twenty, and the April wind was magical. I thought I had never seen so beautiful a smile, a smile so radiant, so tender.

I watched the young girl as she tripped down the church steps, and crossed the piazza, coming towards me. Her smile lingered, fading slowly, slowly, from her face.

As she neared me, her eyes met mine. For a second we looked straight into each other's eyes. . . .

Oh, there was nothing bold, nothing sophisticated or immodest, in the momentary gaze she gave me. It was a natural, spontaneous gaze of perfectly frank, of perfectly innocent and impulsive interest, in exchange for mine of open admiration. But it touched the wildfire in my veins, and made it leap tumultuously.

IV

Happiness often passes close to us without our suspecting it, the proverb says.

The young girl moved on ; and I stood still, feeling dimly that something precious had passed close to me. I had not turned back to follow any of the brazenly provocative contadine. But now I could not help it. Something precious had passed within arm's reach of me. I must not let it go, without at least a semblance of pursuing it. If I waited there passive till she was out of sight, my regrets would be embittered by the recollection that I had not even tried.

I followed her eagerly, but vaguely, in a tremor of unformulated hopes and fears. I had no definite intentions, no designs. Presently, doubtless, she would come to her journey's end—she would disappear in a house or shop—and I should have my labour for my pains. Nevertheless, I followed. What would you? She was young, she was pretty, she was neatly dressed. She had big bright brown eyes, and a slender waist, and a little round scarlet hat set jauntily upon a mass of waving soft brown hair. And she walked gracefully, with delicious undulations, as if to music, lifting her skirts up from the pavement, and so disclosing the daintiest of feet, in trim buttoned boots, of glazed leather, with high Italian heels. And her smile was lovely—and I was twenty—and it was April. I must not let her escape me, without at least a semblance of pursuit.

She led me down the salita that I had just ascended. She could scarcely know that she was being followed, for she had not once glanced behind her.

V

At first I followed meekly, unperceived, and contented to remain so.

But little by little a desire for more aggressive measures grew within me. I said, "Why not—instead of following meekly—

why not overtake and outdistance her, then turn round, and come face to face with her again? And if again her eyes should meet mine as frankly as they met them in the piazza. . . ."

The mere imagination of their doing so made my heart stop beating.

I quickened my pace. I drew nearer and nearer to her. I came abreast of her—oh, how the wildfire trembled! I pressed on for a bit, and then, true to my resolution, turned back.

Her eyes did meet mine again quite frankly. What was more, they brightened with a little light of surprise, I might almost have fancied a little light of pleasure.

If the mere imagination of the thing had made my heart stop beating, the thing itself set it to pounding, racing, uncontrollably, so that I felt all but suffocated, and had to catch my breath.

She knew now that the young man she had passed in the piazza had followed her of set purpose; and she was surprised, but, seemingly, not displeased. They were wonderfully gentle, wonderfully winning eyes, those eyes she raised so frankly to my desirous ones; and innocent, innocent, with all the unsuspecting innocence of childhood. In years she might be seventeen, older perhaps; but there was a child's fearless unconsciousness of evil in her wide brown eyes. She had not yet been taught (or, anyhow, she clearly didn't believe) that it is dangerous and unbecoming to exchange glances with a stranger in the streets.

She was as good as smiling on me. Might I dare the utmost? Might I venture to speak to her? . . . My heart was throbbing too violently. I could not have found an articulate human word, nor a shred of voice, nor a pennyweight of self-assurance, in my body.

So, thrilling with excitement, quailing in panic, I passed her again.

I passed her, and kept on up the narrow alley for half a dozen steps, when again I turned.

She was standing where I had left her, looking after me. There was the expression of unabashed disappointment in her dark eyes now; which, in a minute, melted to an expression of appeal.

"Oh, aren't you going to speak to me, after all?" they pleaded.

Wooed by those soft monitors, I plucked up a sort of desperate courage. Hot coals burned in my cheeks, something fluttered terribly in my breast; I was literally quaking in every limb. My spirit was exultant, but my flesh was faint. Her eyes drew me, drew me. . . . I fancy myself awkwardly raising my hat; I hear myself accomplish a half-smothered salutation.

"Buon' giorno, Signorina."

Her face lit up with that celestial smile of hers; and in a voice that was like ivory and white velvet, she returned, "Buon' giorno, Signorino."

VI

And then I don't know how long we stood together in silence.

This would never do, I recognised. I must not stand before her in silence, like a guilty schoolboy. I must feign composure. I must carry off the situation lightly, like a man of the world, a man of experience. I groped anxiously in the confusion of my wits for something that might pass for an apposite remark.

At last I had a flash of inspiration. "What—what fine weather," I gasped. "Che bel tempo!"

"Oh, molto bello," she responded. It was like a cadenza on a flute.

"You—you are going into the town?" I questioned.

"Yes," said she.

"May I—may I have the pleasure——" I faltered.

"But yes," she consented, with an inflection that wondered "What else have you spoken to me for?"

And we set off down the salita, side by side.

VII

She had exquisite little white ears, with little coral earrings, like drops of blood; and a perfect rosebud mouth, a mouth that matched her eyes for innocence and sweetness. Her scarlet hat burned in the sun, and her brown hair shook gently under it. She had plump little soft white hands.

Presently, when I had begun to feel more at my ease, I hazarded a question. "You are a republican, Signorina?"

"No," she assured me, with a puzzled elevation of the brows.

"Ah, well, then you are a cardinal," I concluded.

She gave a silvery trill of laughter, and asked, "Why must I be either a republican or a cardinal?"

"You wear a *bonnet rouge*—a scarlet hat," I explained.

At which she laughed again, crisply, merrily.

"You are French," she said.

"Oh, am I?"

"Aren't you?"

"As you wish, Signorina; but I had never thought so."

And still again she laughed.

"You have come from church," said I.

"Già," she assented; "from confession."

"Really? And did you have a great many wickednesses to confess?"

"Oh, yes; many, many," she answered simply.

"And now have you got a heavy penance to perform?"

"No; only twenty *aves*. And I must turn my tongue seven times in my mouth before I speak, whenever I am angry."

"Ah, then you are given to being angry? You have a bad temper?"

"Oh, dreadful, dreadful," she cried, nodding her head.

It was my turn to laugh now. "Then I must be careful not to vex you."

"Yes. But I will turn my tongue seven times before I speak, if you do," she promised.

"Are you going far?" I asked.

"I am going nowhere. I am taking a walk."

"Shall we go to the Villa Nazionale, and watch the driving?"

"Or to the Toledo, and look at the shop-windows?"

"We can do both. We will begin at the Toledo, and end in the Villa."

"Bene," she acquiesced.

After a little silence, "I am so glad I met you," I informed her, looking into her eyes.

Her eyes softened adorably. "I am so glad too," she said.

"You are lovely, you are sweet," I vowed, with enthusiasm.

"Oh, no!" she protested. "I am as God made me."

"You are lovely, you are sweet. I thought—when I first saw you, above there, in the piazza—when you came out of church, and gave the soldo to the old beggar woman—I thought you had the loveliest smile I had ever seen."

A beautiful blush suffused her face, and her eyes swam in a mist of pleasure. "E vero?" she questioned.

"Oh, vero, vero. That is why I followed you. You don't mind my having followed you?"

"Oh, no; I am glad."

After another interval of silence, "You are not Neapolitan?" I said. "You don't speak like a Neapolitan."

"No; I am Florentine. We live in Naples for my father's health. He is not strong. He cannot endure the cold winters of the North."

I murmured something sympathetic; and she went on, "My father is a violinist. To-day he has gone to Capri, to play at a festival. He will not be back until to-morrow. So I was very lonesome."

"You have no mother?"

"My mother is dead," she said, crossing herself. In a moment she added, with a touch of pride, "During the season my father plays in the orchestra of the San Carlo."

"I am sure I know what your name is," said I.

"Oh? How can you know? What is it?"

"I think your name is Rosabella."

"Ah, then you are wrong. My name is Elisabetta. But in Naples everybody says Zabetta. And yours?"

"Guess."

"Oh, I cannot guess. Not—not Federico?"

"Do I look as if my name were Federico?"

She surveyed me gravely for a minute, then shook her head pensively. "No; I do not think your name is Federico."

And therewith I told her my name, and made her repeat it till she could pronounce it without a struggle. It sounded very pretty, coming from her pretty lips, quite southern and romantic, with its r's tremendously enriched.

"Anyhow, I know your age," said I.

"What is it?"

"You are seventeen."

"No—ever so much older."

"Eighteen then."

"I shall be nineteen in July."

VIII

Before the brilliant shop-windows of the Toledo we dallied for an hour or more, Zabetta's eyes sparkling with delight as they rested on the bright-hued silks, the tortoise-shell and coral, the gold and silver filagree-work, that were there displayed. But when she admired some one particular object above another, and I besought her to let me buy it for her, she refused austerely. "But no, no, no! It is impossible." Then we went on to the Villa, and strolled by the sea-wall, between the blue-green water and the multicoloured procession of people in carriages. And by and by Zabetta confessed that she was tired, and proposed that we should sit down on one of the benches. "A café would be better fun," submitted her companion. And we placed ourselves at one of the out-of-door tables of the café in the garden, where, after some urging, I prevailed upon Zabetta to drink a cup of chocolate. Meanwhile, with the ready confidence of youth, we had each been desultorily autobiographical; and if our actual acquaintance was only the affair of an afternoon, I doubt if in a year we could have felt that we knew each other better.

"I must go home," Zabetta said at last.

"Oh, not yet, not yet," cried I.

"It will be dinner-time. I must go home to dinner."

"But your father is at Capri. You will have to dine alone."

"Yes."

"Then don't. Come with me instead, and dine at a restaurant."

Her eyes glowed wistfully for an instant; but she replied, "Oh, no; I cannot."

"Yes, you can. Come."

"Oh, no; impossible."

"Why?"

"Oh, because."

"Because what?"

"There is my cat. She will have nothing to eat."

"Your cook will give her something."

"My cook!" laughed Zabetta. "My cook is here before you."

"Well, you must be a kind mistress. You must give your cook an evening out."

"But my poor cat?"

"Your cat can catch a mouse."

"There are no mice in our house. She has frightened them all away."

"Then she can wait. A little fast will be good for her soul."

Zabetta laughed, and I said, "Andiamo!"

At the restaurant we climbed to the first floor, and they gave us a table near the window, whence we could look out over the villa to the sea beyond. The sun was sinking, and the sky was gay with rainbow tints, like mother-of-pearl.

Zabetta's face shone joyfully. "This is only the second time in my life that I have dined in a restaurant," she told me. "And the other time was very long ago, when I was quite young. And it wasn't nearly so grand a restaurant as this, either."

"And now what would you like to eat?" I asked, picking up the bill of fare.

"May I look?" she said.

I handed her the document, and she studied it at length. I think, indeed, she read it through. In the end she appeared rather bewildered.

"Oh, there is so much. I don't know. Will you choose, please?"

I made a shift at choosing, and the sympathetic waiter flourished kitchenwards with my commands.

"What is that little green nosegay you wear in your belt, Zabetta?" I inquired.

"Oh, this—it is rosemary. Smell it," she said, breaking off a sprig and offering it to me.

"Rosemary—that's for remembrance," quoted I.

"What does that mean? What language is that?" she asked.

I tried to translate it to her. And then I taught her to say it in English. "Rrosemérri—tsat is forr rremembrrance."

"Will you write it down for me?" she requested. "It is pretty."

And I wrote it for her on the back of one of my cards.

IX

After dinner we crossed the garden again, and again stood by the sea-wall. Over us the soft spring night was like a dark sapphire. Points of red, green, and yellow fire burned from the ships in the bay, and seemed of the same company as the stars above them. A rosy aureole in the sky, to the eastward, marked the smouldering crater of Vesuvius. Away in the Chiaja a man was singing comic songs, to an accompaniment of mandolines and guitars; comic songs that sounded pathetic, as they reached us in the distance.

I asked Zabetta how she wished to finish the evening.

"I don't care," said she.

"Would you like to go to the play?"

"If you wish."

"What do *you* wish?"

"I think I should like to stay here a little longer. It is pleasant."

We leaned on the parapet, close to each other. Her face was very pale in the starlight; her eyes were infinitely deep, and dark, and tender. One of her little hands lay on the stone wall, like a white flower. I took it. It was warm and soft. She did not attempt to withdraw it. I bent over it and kissed it. I kissed it many times. Then I kissed her lips. "Zabetta—I love you—I love you," I murmured fervently.—Don't imagine that I didn't mean it. It was April, and I was twenty.

"I love you, Zabetta. Dearest little Zabetta! I love you so."

"E vero?" she questioned, scarcely above her breath.

"Oh, si; é vero, vero, vero," I asseverated. "And you? And you?"

"Yes, I love you," she whispered.

And then I could say no more. The ecstasy that filled my heart was too poignant. We stood there speechless, hand in hand, and breathed the air of heaven.

By and by Zabetta drew her bunch of rosemary from her belt, and divided it into two parts. One part she gave to me, the other she kept. "Rosemary—it is for constancy," she said. I pressed the cool herb to my face for a moment, inhaling its bitter-sweet fragrance; then I fastened it in my buttonhole. On my watchchain I wore—what everybody in Naples used to wear—a little coral hand, a little clenched coral hand, holding a little golden dagger. I detached it now, and made Zabetta take it. "Coral—that is also for constancy," I reminded her; "and besides, it protects one from the Evil Eye."

X

At last Zabetta asked me what time it was; and when she learned that it was half-past nine, she insisted that she really must go home. "They shut the outer door of the house we live in at ten o'clock, and I have no key."

"You can ring up the porter."

"Oh, there is no porter."

"But if we had gone to the theatre?"

"I should have had to leave you in the middle of the play."

"Ah, well," I consented; and we left the villa, and took a cab.

"Are you happy, Zabetta?" I asked her, as the cab rattled us towards our parting.

"Oh, so happy, so happy! I have never been so happy before."

"Dearest Zabetta!"

"You will love me always?"

"Always, always."

"We will see each other every day. We will see each other to-morrow?"

"Oh, to-morrow!" I groaned suddenly, the actualities of life rushing all at once upon my mind.

"What is it? What of to-morrow?"

"Oh, to-morrow, to-morrow!"

"What? What?" Her voice was breathless with suspense, with alarm.

"Oh, I had forgotten. You will think I am a beast."

"What is it? For heaven's sake, tell me."

"You will think I am a beast. You will think I have deceived you. To-morrow—I cannot help it—I am not my own master

—I am summoned by my parents—to-morrow I am going away—I am leaving Naples."

"You are leaving Naples?"

"I am going to Paris."

"To Paris?"

"Yes."

There was a breathing-space of silence. Then "Oh, Dío!" sobbed Zabetta; and she began to cry as if her heart would break.

I seized her hands; I drew her to me. I tried to comfort her. But she only cried and cried and cried.

"Zabetta . . . Zabetta! . . . Don't cry. . . . Forgive me. . . . Oh, don't cry like that."

"Oh, Dio! Oh, caro Dio!" she sobbed.

"Zabetta—listen to me," I began. "I have something to say to you. . . ."

"Cosa?" she asked faintly.

"Zabetta—do you really love me?"

"Oh, tanto, tanto!"

"Then, listen, Zabetta. If you really love me—come with me."

"Come with you. How?"

"Come with me to Paris."

"To Paris?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

There was another instant of silence, and then again Zabetta began to cry.

"Will you? Will you? Will you come with me to Paris?" I implored her.

"Oh, I would, I would. But I can't. I can't."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I can't."

"Why? Why can't you?"

"Oh, my father—I cannot leave my father."

"Your father? But—if you love me——"

"He is old. He is ill. He has no one but me. I cannot leave him."

"Zabetta!"

"No, no. I cannot leave him. Oh, Dio mio!"

"But Zabetta——"

"No. It would be a sin. Oh, the worst of sins. He is old and ill. I cannot leave him. Don't ask me. It would be dreadful."

"But then? Then what? What shall we do?"

"Oh, I don't know. I wish I were dead."

The cab came to a standstill, and Zabetta said, "Here we are." I helped her to descend. We were before a dark porte-cochère, in some dark back-street, high up the hillside.

"Addio," said Zabetta, holding out her hand.

"You won't come with me?"

"I can't. I can't. Addio."

"Oh, Zabetta! Do you—— Oh, say, say that you forgive me."

"Yes. Addio."

"And, Zabetta, you—you have my address. It is on the card I gave you. If you ever need anything—if you are ever in trouble of any kind—remember you have my address—you will write to me."

"Yes. Addio."

"Addio."

She stood for a second, looking up at me from great brimming eyes, and then she turned away and vanished in the darkness of the porte-cochère. I got into the cab, and was driven to my hotel.

XI

And here, one might have supposed, was an end of the episode; but no.

I went to Paris, I went to New York, I returned to Paris, I came on to London; and in this journeying more than a year was lost. In the beginning I had suffered as much as you could wish me in the way of contrition, in the way of regret too. I blamed myself and pitied myself with almost equal fervour. I had trifled with a gentle human heart; I had been compelled to let a priceless human treasure slip from my possession. But—I was twenty. And there were other girls in the world. And a year is a long time, when we are twenty. Little by little the image of Zabetta faded, faded. By the year's end, I am afraid it had become very pale indeed. . . .

It was late June, and I was in London, when the post brought me a letter. The letter bore an Italian stamp, and had originally been directed to my old address in Paris. Thence (as the numerous re-directions on the big square foreign envelope attested) it had been forwarded to New York; thence back again to Paris; and thence finally to London.

The letter was written in the neatest of tiny copperplates; and this is a translation of what it said:

"Dear Friend:

"My poor father died last month in the German Hospital, after an illness of twenty-one days. Pray for his soul.

"I am now alone and free, and if you still wish it, can come to you. It was impossible for me to come when you asked me; but you have not ceased to be my constant thought. I keep your coral hand.

"Your ever faithful

"Zabetta Collaluce."

Enclosed in the letter there was a sprig of some dried, bitter-sweet-smelling herb; and, in pencil, below the signature,—laboriously traced, as I could guess, from what I had written for her on my visiting-card,—the English phrase: "Rosemary—that's for remembrance."

The letter was dated early in May, which made it six weeks old.

What could I do? What answer could I send?

Of course, you know what I did do. I procrastinated and vacillated, and ended by sending no answer at all. I could not write and say "Yes, come to me." But how could I write and say, "No, do not come?" Besides, would she not have given up hoping for an answer, by this time? It was six weeks since she had written. I tried to think that the worst was over.

But my remorse took a new and a longer and a stronger lease of life. A vision of Zabetta, pale, with anxious eyes, standing at her window, waiting, waiting for a word that never came,—for months I could not chase it from my conscience; it was years before it altogether ceased its accusing visits.

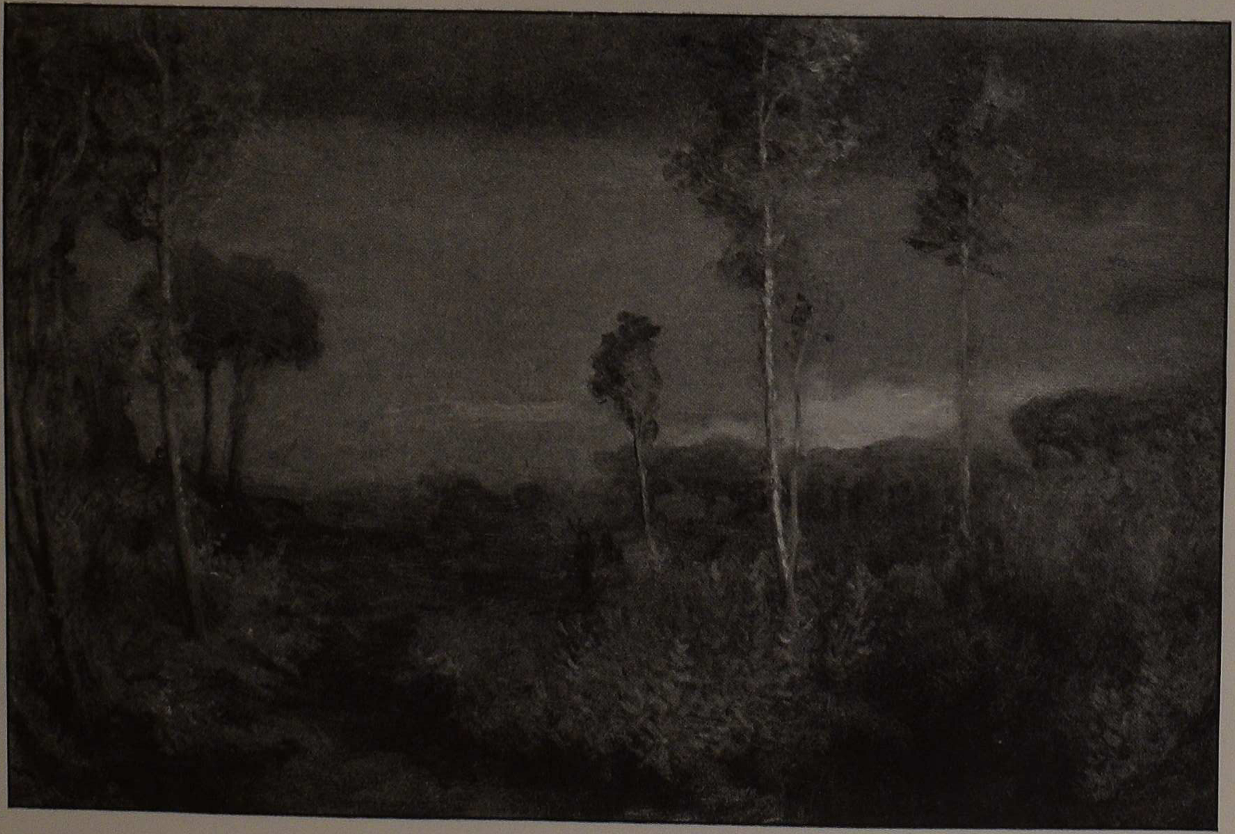
XII

And then, last night, after a perfectly usual London day and evening, I went to bed and dreamed of her vividly; and all day long to-day the fragrance of my dream has clung about me,—a bitter-sweet fragrance, like that of rosemary itself. Where is Zabetta now? What is her life? How have the years treated her? . . . In my dream she was still eighteen. In reality—it is melancholy to think how far from eighteen she has had leisure, since that April afternoon, to drift.

Youth faces forward, impatient of the present, panting to anticipate the future. But we who have crossed a certain sad meridian, we turn our gaze backwards, and tell the relentless gods what we would sacrifice to recover a little of the past, one of those shining days when to us also it was given to sojourn among the Fortunate Islands. *Ah, si jeunesse savait!* . . .

Trees

By Alfred Thornton



Three Poems

By Dauphin Meunier

I—Au bord du Lac Léman

Le soir apaise au loin le bruit grave des villes,
O lac ! et sur les bords de tes dormantes eaux
Voici que j'appareille en songe des vaisseaux
Dédaigneux de l'effort lent des rames serviles ;
Car un souffle plus pur que l'haleine d'Eros
Anime doucement leurs voiles dans le calme ;
Et leur flotte s'éloigne avec un bruit de palmes
Vers une île de paix comme des albatros.

Et moi, leur capitaine, en proie au jeu des vents,
Je vois soudain, malgré l'horizon décevant,
Dans le halo d'argent où la lune s'élève,
Un Labrador s'ouvrir avec des mains de rêve.

(*Souvenir de Vevey à Madame Paul Vérola*).

Une

II—Hyde Park

Une buée a peu à peu
Noyé le vaste paysage
Où ne transparaissent que bleus
Des visages sous ce nuage ;

Un mystère d'àme ou de femme
Rêve, épars, en ce vêtement
D'ombre que percent, par moment,
Des yeux comme les cieux—sans flamme . . .

La lune meurt sur cette plaine,
Ou le soleil ; on ne sait pas
Quel tapis assourdit les pas
D'un velours de neige ou de laine ;

L'air est dense, les corps sont vagues ;
Ce n'est ni le jour ni la nuit ;
Peut-être—de joie ou d'ennui—
Que le paysage divague. . . .

(*Souvenir de Londres à Madame Aline Harland*).

III—Chapelle Dissidente

(London)

Vénérable temple
Et digne pasteur !
Sa redingote ample
A l'air de rigueur.

Protestante et raide
Est son âme aussi ;
Le mal n'est pas si
Laid que le remède.

Mains sans onction,
Visage revêche..,
Vite ! qu'on nous prêche
La tentation !

Mieux vaut, bonne ou male
La mort à Paris
Que la vie au prix
De cette morale !

(*Pour Mr. Aubrey Beardsley.*)

Two Studies

By Mrs. Murray Hickson

I—At the Cross Roads

"For to no man is it given to understand a woman, nor to any woman to understand a man."

The boat from Dieppe had just arrived, and the passengers were pushing from the decks on to the quay. A tall woman, wrapped in a handsome mantle trimmed with sables, waited for her turn to cross the gangway. Her eyes, wandering restlessly over the little crowd of spectators that had assembled to watch for the arrival of the boat, met those of a man who pressed into the throng towards her. She started, and a sudden flush, beautiful but transitory, touched her face into a youthfulness which it did not otherwise possess. The man took off his hat in salute, and, holding it above his head, thrust forward to the foot of the gangway. He kept his eyes fastened upon her face ; and the expression of his own, in spite of the smile on his lips, was doubtful and anxious. She returned his look gravely, yet with a certain tenderness in her glance. Beckoning to the maid who followed her, she slipped adroitly before a party of staggering sea-sick tourists, and made her way on to the quay.

Their hands met in a pressure, which, on his part, was both close and lingering.

"I could not help it," he said. "You will forgive me for coming?"

She smiled a little. "But I meant to stay all night at the hotel. I am tired. My maid is always ill on the crossing, so I wrote from Paris, and ordered rooms and dinner to be ready for us."

"Yes, so they told me at the hotel. I must go up to town this evening, but I could not wait until to-morrow to see you." He said the last words under his breath. The maid had gone to pass the luggage through the custom-house. Her mistress sat down on a bench inside the waiting-room. She looked up at the man beside her, and sighed a little.

"I am glad that you came," she said gently.

"You got my letter?"

"Yes."

The colour had faded from her face, the light from her eyes. She rose and turned towards the door.

"It is hardly necessary for us to wait here," she said. "Let us go on to the hotel. Mary can follow with the luggage."

They walked together side by side; he, trying to shelter her from the driving rain, she, heedless of the present, shrinking from what was to come with an unavailing dread.

The dull October afternoon was closing in; already the gas was lit in the sitting-room into which they were shown. She reached up to it and turned down the glaring flame till it burned low and dim. The room was cheerless and dreary: on one side a long black horsehair-covered sofa; on the other a chiffonier, with coloured bead mats and models of flowers in wax upon it. A square table, covered with a red cloth, stood in the middle of the room, and on it was a large battered tea-tray. A waiter brought in a teapot and some hot water, stirred the fire into a blaze, and retired, shutting the door carefully behind him.

The woman threw off her cloak, and sat down beside the table. She took up the heavy metal teapot and poised it in her slender hand.

"Will you have some tea?" she said to her companion.

He was standing beside her, and she looked at him as she spoke. Something in the strained expression of his face shook her hardly-held composure beyond the power of control. Her hands trembled, and setting the teapot down again unsteadily, she rose to her feet and confronted him. Her own face was as pale as his; their eyes looked into each other's, his seeking, hers evading, a solution to the problem which confronted them.

"For God's sake," said the man, "don't let us meet like this. Anything is better than aloofness between us two. If you cannot forgive me, say so; I deserve it." He stretched out his hands to her as he spoke; but she, shivering a little, drew back from his touch.

"If it were only that," she said, "the matter would be simple enough. Forgive you! I don't feel—at least the soul of me doesn't—that I have much to forgive. When one demands an impossibility, one should not complain of failure."

He looked bewildered. "I don't think I understand," he said gently. "Sit down here and explain what you mean, and I will try to see the matter through your eyes. It looks black enough now through mine—I can imagine it to be unpardonable in yours," he added bitterly. She sat down obediently upon the sofa. He was going to take his place beside her, but hesitated and finally drew a chair opposite.

She looked at him despairingly. "I shall never make you understand," she said. "I don't understand myself. You will have to give me time."

"Perhaps, after keeping silence so long, I ought never to have told you. Such vulgar infidelities are better left unrevealed."

She was silent. Her hands, which she held clenched in her lap, were very cold, and presently she fell to rubbing them softly one over the other. The man set his lips closer together; he had often so chafed her hands for her, and he longed to do so now. It seemed monstrous that, when at last their love was free and admissible, they two should feel apart the one from the other. Yet he recognised, with dreary assent, that such was the case. He regretted the sense of honour which had goaded him, ere he and she should begin their new life together, into an absolute frankness about the past. And yet did he regret it? He doubted his power to possess his soul in secret, away from hers, and, if that were so, better a confession now than later, when their union would be irrevocable. He looked once more at the little hands, motionless again in her lap, and longed to take them in his own. But his heart failed him. It was the old trouble, the old difficulty; the difference of outlook between the sexes. A pity, he thought, that this modern woman whom he loved, had so imbued him with her modern views that he had been unable to keep his own counsel. And yet, even if her gospel of equality separated them, he felt it to be, after all, a true one. He would not have forgiven her such a fault as he had confessed, and for which, manlike, he expected absolution. But there the difference of sex came in, while, when absolute confidence only was demanded, he felt that she had an equal right to it with himself. After all, she expected, and he had given, only what was her due. If it ruined both their lives so much the worse for them. He wondered—would it?

"I shall never make you understand," she repeated, breaking a silence which both felt unendurable. "But try to be patient with me. It is not that I do not love you; at least I think not. It is not that I do not forgive you. It seems to me that I need your forgiveness more than you need mine. But I feel that we have both failed, and that the failure has soiled and spoilt our love." She looked at him piteously.

"Yes?" he said. "Go on."

"All these years that we have loved one another and hidden it from the world, I thought our love was a beautiful thing, good for us both. Though I could not be your wife, I imagined that I was everything else you needed: your friend, your comrade, your very heart and life. As your love raised and made me a better woman, so I believed that my love made you a better man."

He was leaning forward in his chair; a puzzled frown upon his forehead.

"It did," he said; "it does. Go on."

"Then, when I heard at last that he was dead, and that we were free—you and I, to love and to marry—it seemed as if the joy would kill me. I wrote to you—you know what I wrote. And then your letter. . . . Perhaps I was over-sensitive; perhaps it came at the wrong moment——"

She stopped, and he rose to his feet.

"Never mind," he said. "Don't say any more; it hurts you. You can't get over it, and no wonder. I despise myself, and I am going."

She put out her hands to stop him.

"Wait," she said. "Indeed—indeed, you do not understand." She rose also, and stood before him. "Oh!" she went on, with shaking lips, "but you must understand, you *must*. I see—I suppose that I expected too much. All that hopeless waiting—

all those long years—and then the constant strain and restlessness of it all. Don't think I blame you—much. I think I comprehend. It is not that, though that hurts me too; but I see now that the whole thing has been a horrible mistake from the first. It was insane pride that made me so sure your welfare lay in my hands. I was dragging you down, not, as I imagined, helping you to be what I believed you were. I was selfish; I thought more of myself than I did of you——"

"If that is your opinion of yourself," he interrupted bitterly, "what must you think of me? I—who took all you could give to me, and then had not the manhood to keep out of vulgar dissipation, nor the pluck to hold my tongue about it and save you the pain and humiliation of the knowledge."

Suddenly she stretched out her hands to him.

"Oh, no! not that!" she said, with a sob; "don't say that. You were right to tell me."

He took her hands in his, and, almost timidly, drew her towards him.

"I expected more than a man is capable of; it is my fault. I dragged you down," she repeated, insistently.

"That is not true, and you know it," he answered. "The fault was mine, but——"

He drew her closer. "Can't you forgive it?" he whispered. "You were not my wife—I had no hope of ever winning you—yet I could give my love to no one else. My heart has never been disloyal to you for a moment, and——" he hesitated. "There are so few who would have done otherwise," he added, hurriedly.

She still held herself braced away from his gentle compulsion. "I—I suppose so," she said, under her breath.

"And now—now, when at last you will be my own, surely you could not doubt me? It would be horrible, impossible." His voice dropped again into a murmur.

"Can't you forgive me—and forget?"

There was a pause. His eyes devoured her face.

"Give me time," she said. "I don't think we see it in the same light; and if you do not understand I cannot explain myself. But give me time, I beg of you."

* * * * *

An hour afterwards the maid came in, and found her mistress sitting over the dying fire. The girl turned up the gas and, in the sudden glare, the dreary hotel sitting-room looked more tawdry and commonplace than ever. The tablecover was pulled awry; the curtains, dragged across the window, were ragged and dirty; under the maid's feet, as she crossed the floor, some bits of scattered coal crunched uncomfortably. She knelt on the hearth-rug and raked the ashes together, trying to rekindle a blaze. Her mistress looked on apathetically.

"That is how I feel," she said to herself. "It is all dead now: he will never understand it; but that is how I feel. If it had been before his love for me—but now I know I was no help to him, only a hindrance, and all the best of me seems cold and numb."

The maid rose from her knees; a tiny flame was flickering in the grate. She went out again, and left her mistress sitting there before the reviving fire.

II—A Vigil

When ten o'clock struck she moved uneasily in her chair. The dainty Dresden china timepiece on the overmantel had been a wedding present, and, as the soft notes of the hour broke upon the silence, her thoughts turned swiftly into memories. The years had been few and short, yet the changes they had brought, though subtle, were unmistakable. There was nothing tangible, nothing of which she could complain, and yet, for the last few months, she had known, in a vague, puzzled way, that trouble was closing in upon her. The nature of that trouble she had not faced or analysed ; she put all definition away for as long as might be possible.

To-night she had not felt any special uneasiness. He might have stayed at the club, or been detained in the City—such delays had happened frequently of late, and had not seemed to her of much moment. She had grown accustomed to the lack of consideration which made him neglect to send her a telegram, but now the chiming of the clock caught her attention, and, of a sudden, her mind awoke, expanding to receive the impression of impending disturbance. There was no particular reason for this impression, only a certainty of misfortune which she felt advancing towards her in the coming hours.

She rose and crossed the hall into the dining-room. She had waited for him until half-past eight, and then had dined alone, after which the table was relaid in readiness for his return. That morning, when he left the house, he had kissed her with almost his old tenderness, and she wanted to express her gratitude for that kiss. She wandered round the table, rearranging the silver with solicitous fingers. It was still just possible that he had not dined in town ; his wife hoped not. He would be sure to catch the 10.15 down train—never since their marriage had he been later—his supper should be a cosy meal. There were oysters in the house, and she went into the kitchen to see that they were opened.

The kitchen was warm and comfortable. She stood for a few minutes, her foot upon the fender, chatting to the servants ; they had been with her since her marriage, and they loved and cared for her.

"Your master won't be home till past eleven," she said ; "when you have laid the supper you can go to bed. I will wait upon him myself." She turned to leave the kitchen, but lingered for a moment in the red glow of the fire. Her own part of the house was so still and lonely ; here, at any rate, was companionship and a refuge from haunting fancies. Her maid dragged forward a chair, but she shook her head, smiling.

"I have so much to do, and my book is interesting," she said, as she opened the door. It swung behind her, and the cook, knife in hand, paused to lift her eyes and meet those of her fellow-servant. Neither of the women said a word. They heard the drawing-room door shut softly. The maid sat down again beside the hearth, and the cook went on with her work.

* * * * *

At a quarter to eleven the servants fastened the doors and went upstairs to bed. The silence settled down again. Now and then she heard the regular beat of hoofs upon the road as a carriage passed the windows ; a wind got up and flicked the frozen snow against the panes ; the fire burned clear and bright, with a regular throb of flame or the occasional splutter and crackle of a log.

At eleven o'clock she laid her open book upon the table, and went out into the hall. It was very cold, and she shivered a little as she opened the door and looked out upon the night. The air was keen and frosty, a frail moon, its edges veiled by intermittent cloud, rode in the sky, and the stars snapped as though the sharpened atmosphere struck sparks from their steady shining. The road lay white and deserted, here and there a light shone from the neighbouring houses, but for the most part the village had already gone to sleep. Presently, as she stood there, the distant sound of a train sweeping through the country caught her listening ears. It paused, then broke again upon the silence. She smiled a little and went back into the house, shutting the door behind her. The train was late, but it had come at last; in ten minutes he would be here. There was no use in sitting down again during those ten short minutes; she wanted to be ready, when his step rang on the hard road, to open the door immediately. Meantime she trod softly about the drawing-room, shifting the ornaments upon the overmantel a shade to right or left, and examining the pretty things upon her silver table with abstracted, unremarking eyes.

For many weeks the rift between her and her husband had been widening. To-day, by his unaccustomed tenderness, he had re-awakened hers, and she longed for him as she had longed for him in the dead days which seemed so far away. But the minutes slipped into half an hour, and still he did not come. Then fear crept into her heart, and her imagination—always vivid—left now alone in the solitude of the night, played havoc with her reason. As the quarters struck slowly from the church clock in the village, and her own little timepiece chimed in musical response, terror and foreboding shook her spirit in their grip. She sat down again before the fire, and tried to reason out some plausible excuse for this unusual delay. No business that she was able to think of could thus detain her husband, nor had she ever known him to remain away a whole night without due notice given. He was often late for dinner—that signified nothing. Once or twice lately he had come down by this last train; but even then he had prepared her for his absence. Something very grave, very unusual, must have happened.

She lifted her head, and bent forward to rearrange the logs upon the hearth. In so doing she dropped the poker, which fell with a clash into the fender, and the loud noise startled the echoes of the sleeping house, awaking in her mind a fresh train of thought. She imagined him ill—hurt—in some danger. And it was impossible at this hour to go to him or to be of any use. Besides, where could she find him, how penetrate the mystery and terror of this long uncertainty?

She went back into the hall and consulted a time-table. At four o'clock a train reached Wensbury; if he came by that and walked (he must walk, since no cab would be available), he might get home about five o'clock. If he was unhurt she would know—she would feel—— If he did not come she must herself start early in the morning and go up to town to make inquiries. Perhaps he had been run over in the streets, and she would find him in one of the hospitals. He might not be seriously hurt, and yet, again, if not seriously hurt why had no message come to her? Perhaps he was dead, and she—and she a widow. Her fingers closed convulsively over the time-table in her hand, and she walked back to her seat before the fire, leaving the door into the hall open behind her. It was one o'clock now: hours must pass, even if he came to Wensbury, before this weight of suspense could be lifted from her heart. And what if he never came? What if she never saw him again alive? She considered that, if an accident only had detained him—an accident from which he should recover—she could be glad and thankful. Perhaps the pain, and her care, might bring them once more together. And if not, better even death than another explanation which had flashed across the background of her brain, to be dismissed with horror and self-loathing. If only there had been a reason for their slipping away from one another she could have borne it better. The very vagueness and unreality of the gulf between them frightened her, and rendered her more inarticulate. She had suffered and been still; now, her faculties sharpened by suspense, she endured all the accumulated pain of the last two years fused and mingled with the fancies, fear, and loneliness of the moment.

Sometimes she paced the room; sometimes, at the sound of a chance footstep or the rising of the wind, she opened the hall door and stared out into the night. Once she went upstairs to wake the servants, but, recollecting herself, came back and dropped once more into the big chair by the fire.

With the self-torture of a high-strung brain she could formulate no explanations save the worst, until, as the hours wore on, mental torment brought with it the consequent relief of numbness.

* * * * *

When he came into the drawing-room the following evening she rose from her seat and welcomed him as usual. Her face was drawn and white, but her voice did not falter, and her eyes met his unflinchingly.

He stood upon the hearth-rug before the fire, talking for a few moments carelessly, till a strained silence fell between them. He took out his watch and glanced at it, then, turning restlessly, pushed the blazing logs together with his foot.

"You got my letter? I was sorry not to be home last night. I'm afraid, little woman, that you waited dinner for me, but it was too late to send you a telegram."

"Yes, your letter came this morning," she said, apathetically. The reaction from last night's tension had brought with it a strange indifference. She felt that his presence meant nothing to her now, that his absence would have meant even less. Her heart was frozen. Active pain would have been better than this paralysis, and she longed to feel, but could not do so. He faced her once more; his glance met hers uneasily.

"You understand how it was? I was unable to help it," he said, his voice stumbling a little as he spoke. She lifted her head.

"Yes," she said, "I understand."

He looked at her in silence, then picking up a paper, unfolded it and began to read. She shivered a little, and leant nearer to the fire. Her thoughts wandered vaguely. She knew that he had lied to her, but she did not care. The stealthy sorrow of her married life, after stalking her spirit for a couple of years, had sprung upon her in the space of time which it took her to read his letter. Instinct guided her to the truth, and there it left her. The rest was a tangle, and, for the moment, she cared only for the physical comfort of apathy and quiescence.

She stretched out her cold hands to the blaze, while her husband watched her furtively from behind his newspaper.

The deep tones of the village clock, striking the half-hour, broke upon the silence; and a moment later the timepiece on the mantelshelf chimed an echoing response.

The Ring of Life

By Edmund Gosse

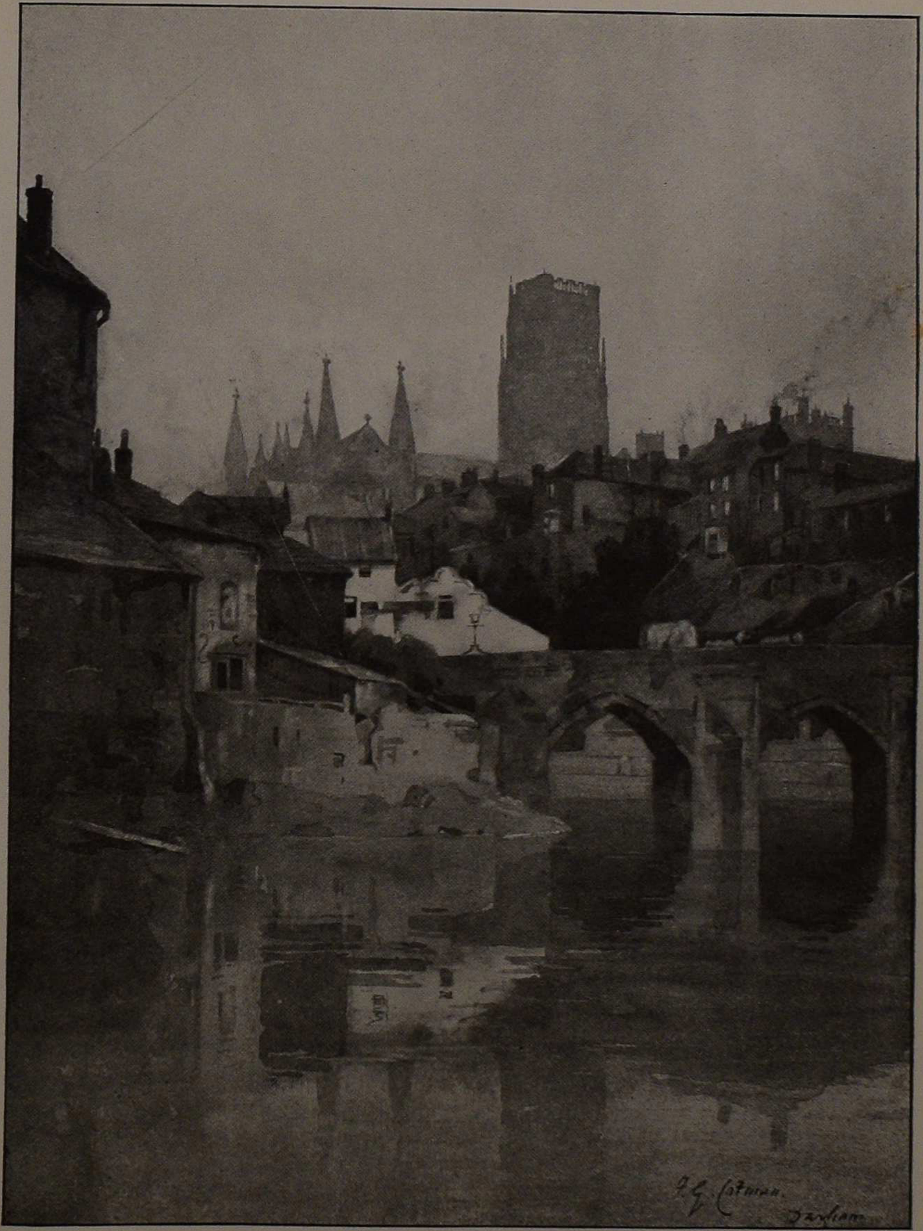
We trod the bleak ridge, to and fro,
Grave forty, gay fourteen ;
The yellow larks in Heaven's blue glow
Like twinkling stars were seen,
And pink-flower'd larches, fring'd below,
Were fabulously green.

And, as I watched my restless son
Leap over gorse and briar,
And felt his golden nature run
With April sap and fire,
Methought another madpate spun
Beside another sire.

Sudden, the thirty years wing by,
Shot, like a curtain's rings ;
My father treads the ridge, and I
The boy that leaps and flings ;
While eyes that in the churchyard lie,
Seem smiling tenderest things.

A Study of Durham

By F. G. Cotman


F. G. Cotman.
Durham

Pierre Gascon

By Charles Kennett Burrow

PIERRE GASCON was old, so old that he seemed to have drifted into a backwater of time, and to lie there forgotten. His age had grown upon him imperceptibly. He had not felt its steady besiegement, like other men, in the waning of the vital fires of life ; it was only something more placid than his youth ; a time of less excursive contemplation, a season of calm more wholly personal than before. He had deliberately shut out the world, and knew it only by rumour as a place where people committed intolerable follies both of body and mind, rearing children to reap what they had sown, loving with preposterous fatuity and a devotion, Pierre Gascon in his blind soul believed, a hundred times more worthy than its object.

He lived in a great house surrounded by a beautiful and luxuriant garden, enclosed by high walls. It was not far from a busy city, and on silent evenings as he sat under his lime trees, the humming of the restless hive reached him in an unvarying undertone. Sometimes, on clear mornings, he caught the gleam of distant spires—the symbols, in his eyes, of a vain and idle worship. He argued with the almost divine assumption of lack of knowledge, and for many years had held himself the only true philosopher.

Pierre Gascon's face bore none of the marks that blazon a man's life to the seeing eye. It was the face of a child grown old in the smallest part of childishness, and the white hair that crowned it struck a note of curious incongruity. He hung upon the fringes of life as a cobweb may hang upon a briar; he breathed like ordinary men, but was divorced from the human impulses of the body; he had chosen his way and followed it almost to the end; and the end, he thought, because it still seemed far off, should be of a piece with the rest.

One only of the associates of his early youth ever visited him. He was a physician in the town which smoked on the horizon; and sometimes Doctor Carton, snatching a few hours from the persistent ardour of his occupation, would bring within the walls of Pierre Gascon's house the only manlike element that ever came there. The Doctor had watched the course of the man, whom he had known in his boyhood, with a growing wonder that at last had settled into a steady flame of scorn. He, coming fresh from the great city, where life and death jostled together on the footways, where crime and virtue lived side by side in apparent union, and where the passions of the soul broke loose in strenuous mastery, was amazed at this man who knew nothing of it all. Sometimes he found it in his heart to pity him, but it was less a pity of the emotions than of the mind, a mental exercise that left no good with the bestower. The Doctor was steeped in the mystery and strangeness of life, in the element which it was his task to nurture; and his familiarity with death but strung him to a higher note of purpose. In Pierre Gascon he saw a man to whom death meant nothing but dissolution, and he shuddered to think that this man had once been young.

The Doctor had not seen Pierre Gascon for many months, and one day, thinking of him as he hurried along the street, he dispatched his business at an earlier hour than usual, and, towards evening, turned his horse in the direction of the recluse's house. As he cleared the squalid suburbs of the city, and emerged into the pleasant country beyond, he breathed more freely, and looked about him with eyes that carried refreshment to his mind at every turn. It was late springtime, and the hedgerows were bright with dog-rose and convolvulus ; a gentle wind rustled in the tree-tops ; the sound of running water fell with a dreamy murmur on his ear, and the sky was flecked with white airy clouds that slowly moved from west to east. The Doctor himself was old ; his face was lined into a thousand wrinkles, and his back was bent with much watching and study ; yet there moved in his blood some strong and stirring memories of the past, and the ashes of his youth still held some living fire.

He found Pierre Gascon in his garden, sitting in his favourite seat beneath the limes. He rose to meet the Doctor slowly, with no hint either of pleasure or disapproval on his face. The hand with which he greeted him left no friendly pressure on the Doctor's palm.

"Still here," said the Doctor ; "no change ?"

"None," replied the other. "I am content. I have here all that I need. You have known me long enough to understand that I desire no change."

"Ah," said the Doctor. His quick eye observed a change of no small moment in Pierre Gascon's face ; the temples were a trifle sunken, the cheeks less full, the eyes less clouded. He knew the signs too well to doubt them, and Pierre Gascon was old. His scorn turned to instant pity, not only of the mind, but of the heart, and as they walked towards the house together he took the other's arm for the first time in many years.

"Gascon," said the Doctor, "you say that you are now as you have always been. Think once more before you answer me."

"Why doubt it?" replied the other. "Your eyes see me, your hand touches me."

"I ask no idle questions. My life is too full of striving to find answers. Believe me, I ask you as a doctor and as a friend."

Pierre Gascon paused and glanced at the Doctor's face.

"You think me ill? Well, it may be so. My strength, perhaps, has seemed to fail a little. But what matter? I fear nothing."

"I see not only that you are ill, but that death is very near to you. His hand may at this moment be stretched out to touch you. I am familiar with the sight; but does it bring no fear to you?"

"None," replied the other. His voice was firm, but his face had taken a sudden tinge of grey.

They sat down together in a small room lined with books, which opened on the garden. Pierre Gascon gazed steadily through the open window. The Doctor watched him. They were silent for many minutes, and Doctor Carton's anger began to rise again.

"You say you have no fear," he said at last. "I know of one thing only that can save a man from that—the memory of a life spent with some purpose. Have you this memory?"

"I have lived my life," replied the other calmly.

"You have lived your life!" cried the Doctor, rising and pacing the room. "Lived! You have eaten, drunk, slept, moved and breathed, but that is not to have lived. What good action have you ever done, what bad impulse ever had the strength to carry into deed? I deal plainly with you. Here you stand upon the very brink of death; you say that you have lived. Are you so blind as not to see that the very words are false? Dare you go into eternity with a record absolutely blank?"

Pierre Gascon followed the Doctor's figure with his eyes. The placid stream of his insane philosophy was rudely shaken by this unexpected storm. He wondered, for an instant, whether what he regarded as his self-control had been weakness of the basest kind. But the old habit of thought was strong upon him, and he slipped back to it again.

"You talk idly, Carton," he replied. "I choose my way deliberately with open eyes. Blame me if you will; I have at least been consistent in my course."

"True," said the Doctor, "hopelessly consistent; that is the only virtue of weakness. But will that avail you when you come to die? Were you born a sentient atom, with the means and strength of life, to be damned at last for this? In heaven's name do not flirt consistency in the face of God."

Pierre Gascon moved uneasily. The threads were becoming tangled, just when he was ready to tie the final knot.

"You have lived in the world, Carton; what have you done to give you the right to judge me now?"

"What have I done?" cried the Doctor. "I have grown old in lessening human suffering. That was my business, you may say. Good; I claim no virtue for it. I have sinned open-eyed, and sucked poison from strange flowers. I have burnt in the fierce fires of remorse, and thereby learnt charity. I have reared my children to face the world and fight through it, not to skulk in corners. I have only a few rags and tatters of self-conceit left, and I hope to strip myself of those before I die."

"Yes," said Pierre Gascon, "my life has not been like that. Which of us is right?"

"Ask yourself, not me. Have you ever loved a woman? Have you ever made children happy? Have you ever cheated the devil for an hour, and then compounded for your virtue with a greater crime? That is the way with men for a time. Have you ever done any of these things? If so, there may be some shadow of hope to cling to yet."

"I have done none of these things, Carton."

Pierre Gascon sat with bowed head and trembled. He felt his strength ebbing from him with every heart-beat; his mind was confused and blurred with a hundred accusing images, but not one of them arose from any act of his. His condemnation flowed in upon him like a tide, and he had but a few hours to live. Could anything be done in so short a time to save him even in the eyes of one man?

"For God's sake," cried the Doctor, "if nothing else remains, at least commit some sin to be reckoned in your account as virtue. Show that you are still a man, though you have spent your life in hiding from the fact. Something may be done yet."

"I am too old," wailed Gascon, "I am too old. Is there no good that I can do? I have a nephew, my brother's son, can I do nothing for him?"

"He died a year ago, in poverty, wasted by disease, but fighting to the last. You are too late. He left a wife and child; they too have vanished."

"But they can be found. Let us find them, Carton; let us set out at once. I am ready to go with you now." He rose, with eager outstretched hands, and crossed the room to Carton's side.

"Where shall we go?" said Carton; "it is already night. The streets of the city are full of pleasure-seekers; the noise would stun you, and you are near your end."

"Let us go," said Pierre Gascon again; "I can do nothing here. I cannot die here. Take me to the city. Let me see my kind again, for the love of God. There may be some chance yet!"

Carton watched him put on cloak and hat in feverish haste. Then he went to a safe and filled his pockets with gold. A few pieces fell, and lay like drops of light upon the floor. The Doctor smiled grimly—strange that even at the last he should count on gold to help him. He did not shrink from complying with Gascon's wish ; it could, at most, only shorten his life by a few hours.

Pierre Gascon said nothing as they were rapidly driven towards the city. The night was warm, with little wind, and the scent of the hedgerows and fields hung in the air. The moon at times was obscured by flying vapour, and again it would shine full upon the speeding carriage, drawing nearer and nearer to the city lights, and on Pierre Gascon's pallid, haunted face.

At last they were in the streets, and moving at a slower pace. The long lines of lamps, the swaying shadows, the roar of wheels, and continual beat of feet, above all the shifting faces of the crowd, bore in on Pierre Gascon's mind with a new terror. In any one of all these people might lie his hope of redemption—but how to choose ? The faces gleamed upon him and passed like shadows in a dream, some glad, some beautiful, some stern as fate, some stained with crime. The voices surged in his ears in a myriad conflicting waves of sound, with every now and then a cry or shrilling laugh rising above the clamour like a signal. He watched them all, as they went by, with impotent longing, and with every minute his agony increased.

A crowd of mingled men and women stood at the corner of a street, listening idly to a shrill-voiced preacher. As the carriage passed Pierre Gascon half rose from his seat, and, filling both hands with gold, cast it into the throng with a cry. They fought for it like maniacs, the preacher amongst the rest, and the sound of the turmoil followed them like an echo down the street.

"That is not the way," said Doctor Carton. "It cost you nothing to do that. The time is short, and I cannot guide you to your last action. You must choose yourself. Let us get out and walk if you are able."

"Yes, yes," said Gascon, eagerly. The Doctor stopped the carriage and they alighted. Pierre Gascon leant heavily upon his arm, and his feet moved unsteadily upon the pavement. But he glanced at the faces as they passed with an awful curiosity, and hurried on.

After a time they reached a more open space, dimly lighted save near the pavement, where the crowd was thick. Here they paused, Pierre Gascon breathing heavily, with great drops of sweat upon his face. His terror had grown to an intolerable agony of dread; he felt life slipping from him, and yet he had not accomplished one saving act.

Suddenly a woman started from the crowd and reeled into the road. She laughed loudly as she went, and flung up her arms as though in mock appeal. Her face still bore some signs of beauty, though sadly blurred and marred.

"There," said the Doctor, "that may be your chance. Who knows? She may be your nephew's wife."

Pierre Gascon heard only the last words. A sudden blinding flash darted across his brain. He started forward with a cry, and reached the woman's side, who stood half dazed in the full tide-way of the varying traffic. He seized her arm and cried:

"Are you his wife?"

"His wife?" she cried, with a bitter laugh; "whose wife?"

A carriage turned the corner sharply and bore down upon them at a rapid pace. Pierre Gascon saw it, and, with all his remaining strength, flung the woman into safety. Then he staggered and fell, and the wheels passed over his body with a sickening jolt.

When Doctor Carton stood by the dead man in a hospital ward an hour later, the face seemed more resolute and stronger than it had ever been in life. It wore a look almost of triumph, and the lips seemed half drawn into a smile.

"Poor Pierre Gascon!" said the Doctor. "How many men would have done as much? His last act may have saved him, after all."

Refrains

By Leila Macdonald

> *". . . Whereupon coming to the bars of his window and looking out, he did begin to weep and lament him, and cry out on the good sun that shone even into the King's prison. But most he did bewail that no one should pay heed to his death. . . ."*

I KNOW not if the air is sweet, nor if the roses flower ;
I only hear one tiny bird that chirps the passing hour.
I know not if the air is sweet, nor if the roses flower.

If I could only flee the death that waits at break of day,
To some untravelled country-side I would escape away.
If I could only flee the death that waits at break of day.

I would not need a house, nor wife, nor even clothes to wear ;
But only God's dear firmament, and sunshine, and the air.
I would not need a house, nor wife, nor even clothes to wear.

What matter all the things men prize, comfort, and luxury,
When one may shout, and laugh, and run, and be at liberty ?
What matter all the things men prize, comfort, and luxury?

What have I done that I should die, who never meant to
wrong?
At best our life is all we have, and cannot last for long.
What have I done that I should die, who never meant to wrong?

Life seems so full of joys to me, now that death comes so near;
I would I had been more content, and had kept better cheer.
Life seems so full of joys to me, now that death comes so near.

If only some one will recall my memory and my name;
I do so fear they may forget even my very shame.
If only some one will recall my memory and my name.

Perchance a girl may weep to see them lead me out to die,
May cross herself, and whisper, "God, he is as young as I."
Perchance a girl may weep to see them lead me out to die.

The Haseltons

By Hubert Crackanthorpe

I

SHE sat in a corner of a large London drawing-room, and the two men stood before her—Hillier Haselton, her husband, and George Swann, her husband's cousin ; and, beyond them, the mellow light of shaded candles, vague groupings of black coats, white shirt-fronts, and gay-tinted dresses, and the noisy hum of conversation.

The subject that the two men were discussing—and more especially Swann's blunt earnestness—stirred her, though throughout it she had been unpleasantly conscious of a smallness, almost a pettiness, in Hillier's aspect.

"Well, but why not, my dear Swann ? Why not be unjust : man's been unjust to woman for so many years."

Hillier let his voice fall listlessly, as if to rebuke the other's vehemence ; and to hint that he was tired of the topic, looked round at his wife, noting at the same time that Swann was observing how he held her gaze in his meaningly. And the unexpectedness of his own attitude charmed him—his hot defence of an absurd theory, obviously evoked by a lover-like desire to please her. Others, whose admiration he could trust, would, he surmised, have reckoned it a pretty pose. And she, perceiving that Swann seemed to take her husband's sincerity for granted, felt a sting of quick regret that she had ever come to understand him, and that she could not still view him as they all viewed him.

Hillier moved away across the room, and Swann drew a stool beside her chair, and asking her for news of Claude, her little boy, talked to her of other things—quite simply, for they were grown like old friends. He looked at her steadily, stroking his rough fair beard, as if he were anxious to convey to her something which he could not put into words. She divined ; and, a little startled, tried to thank him with her eyes ; but, embarrassed by the clumsiness of his own attempt at sympathetic perception, he evidently noticed nothing. And this obtuseness of his disappointed her, since it somehow seemed to confirm her isolation.

She glanced round the room. Hillier stood on the hearth-rug, his elbow on the mantel-piece, busily talking, with slight deferential gestures, to the great English actress in whose honour the dinner had been given. The light fell on his smooth glistening hair, on his quick sensitive face ; for the moment forcing herself to realise him as he appeared to the rest, she felt a thrill of jaded pride in him, in his cleverness, in his reputation, in his social success.

Swann, observing the direction of her gaze, said, almost apologetically, "You must be very proud of him."

She nodded, smiled a faint, assumed smile ; then added, adopting his tone, "His success has made him so happy."

"And you too ? " he queried.

"Of course," she answered quickly.

He stayed silent, while she continued to watch her husband absently.

II

Success, an atmosphere of flattery, suited Hillier Haselton, and stimulating his weaknesses, continually encouraged him to display the handsomer portion of his nature. For though he was yet young—and looked still younger—there was always apparent, beneath his frank boyish relish of praise, a semblance of serious modesty, a strain of genuine reserve. And society—the smart literary society that had taken him up—found this combination charming. So success had made life pleasant for him in many ways, and he rated its value accordingly ; he was too able a man to find pleasure in the facile forms of conceit, or to accept, with more than a certain cynical complacency, the world's generous judgment on his work. Indeed, the whole chorus of admiration did but strengthen his contempt for contemporary literary judgments, a contempt which—lending the dignity of deliberate purpose to his indulgence of his own weakness for adulation—procured him a refined, a private, and an altogether agreeable self-satisfaction. When people set him down as vastly clever, he was pleased ; he was unreasonably annoyed when they spoke of him as a great genius.

Life, he would repeat, was of larger moment than literature ; and, despite all the freshness of his success, his interest in himself, in the play of his own personality, remained keener, and, in its essence, of more lasting a nature, than his ambition for genuine achievement. The world—people with whom he was brought into relation—stimulated him so far as he could assimilate them to his conception of his own attitude ; most forms of art too, in great measure—and music altogether—attracted him in the proportion

portion that they played upon his intimate emotions. Similarly, his friendships; and for this reason he preferred the companionship of women. But since his egoism was uncommonly dexterous, he seemed endowed with a rare gift of artistic perception, of psychological insight, of personal charm.

It had always been his nature to live almost exclusively in the present; his recollection of past impressions was grown scanty from habitual disuse. His sordid actions in the past he forgot with an ever-increasing facility; his moments of generosity or self-sacrifice he remembered carelessly, and enjoyed a secret pride in their concealment; and the conscious embellishment of subjective experience for the purpose of "copy," he had instinctively disdained.

Since his boyhood, religion had been distasteful to him, though, at rare moments, it had stirred his sensibilities strangely. Now, occasionally, the thought of the nullity of life, of its great unsatisfying quality, of the horrid squalor of death, would descend upon him with its crushing, paralysing weight; and he would lament, with bitter, futile regret, his lack of a secure stand-point, and the continual limitations of his self-absorption; but even that, perhaps, was a mere literary melancholy, assimilated from certain passages of Pierre Loti.

But now he had published a stout volume of critical essays, and an important volume of poetry, and society had clamorously ratified his own conception of himself. Certainly, now, in the eyes of the world, it was agreed beyond dispute that she, his wife, was of quite the lesser importance. "She was nice and quiet," which meant that she seemed mildly insignificant; "she had a sense of humour," which meant that an odd note of half-stifled cynicism sometimes escaped her. He was evidently very devoted to her, and on that account women trusted him—all the more because her personality possessed no obvious glamour. Perhaps, now and then, his attentions to her in public seemed a little ostentatious ; but then, in these modern uncourtly days, that in itself was distinctive. In private too, especially at the moments when he found life stimulating, he was still tactful and expansive with sympathetic impulse ; from habit ; from pride in his comprehension of women ; from dislike to cheap hypocrisy. How could he have divined that bitter suppressed seriousness, with which she had taken her disillusionment ; when not once in three months did he consider her apart from the play of his own personality ; otherwise than in the light of her initial attitude towards him ?

And her disillusionment, how had it come ? Certainly not with a rush of sudden overwhelming revelation ; certainly it was in no wise inspired by the tragedy of Nora Helmer. It had been a gradual growth, to whose obscure and trivial beginnings she had not had the learning to ascribe their true significance. To sound the current of life was not her way. She was naïve by nature ; and the ignorance of her girlhood had been due rather to a natural inobservance than to carefully managed surroundings. And yet, she had come to disbelieve in Hillier ; to discredit his clever attractiveness : she had become acutely sensitive to his instability, and, with a secret, instinctive obstinacy, to mistrust the world's praise of his work. Perhaps, had he made less effort in the beginning to achieve a brilliancy of attitude in her eyes, had he schooled her to expect from him a lesser loftiness of aspiration, things might have been very different ; or, at least, there might have resulted from the process of her disillusionment a lesser bitterness of conviction. But she had taken her marriage with so keen an earnestness of ideal, had noted every turn in his personality with so intense an expectation. Perhaps, too, had he detected the first totterings of her ideal conception of him, had he aided her, as it were, to descend his figure from that pedestal where he himself had originally planted it, together they might have set it uninjured on a lower and less exposed plane. But he had never heeded her subtle indications of its insecurity ; alone, she had watched its peril, awaiting with a frightened fascination the day when it should roll headlong in the dust. And, at intervals, she would vaguely marvel, when she observed others whose superior perspicacity she assumed, display no perception of his insincerity. Then the oppressive sense that she—she, his wife, the mother of his child—was the only one who saw him clearly, and the unsurmountable shrinking from the relief of sharing this sense with any one, made her sourly sensitive to the pettiness, the meanness, the hidden tragic element in life.

A gulf had grown between—that was how she described it to herself. Outwardly their relations remained the same ; but, frequently, in his continuance of his former attitude, she detected traces of deliberate effort ; frequently when off his guard, he would abandon all pretension to it, and openly betray how little she had come to mean to him. There were, of course, moments also, when, at the echo of his tenderness, she would feverishly compel herself to believe in its genuineness ; but a minute later he would have forgotten his exaltation, and, almost with irritation, would deliberately ignore the tense yearning that was glowing within her.

And so, the coming of his success—a brilliant blossoming into celebrity—had stirred her but fitfully. Critics wrote of the fine sincerity of his poetry ; while she clung obstinately to her superstition that fine poetry must be the outcome of a great nobility of character. And, sometimes, she hated all this success of his, because it seemed to emphasise the gulf between them, and in some inexplicable way to lessen her value in his eyes: then again, from an impulse of sheer unselfishness, she would succeed in almost welcoming it, because, after all, he was her husband.

But of all this he noted nothing: only now and then he would remind himself vaguely that she had no literary leanings.

The little Claude was three years old. Before his birth, Hillier had dilated much on the mysterious beauty of childhood, had vied with her own awed expectation of the wonderful coming joy. During her confinement, which had been a severe one, for three nights in succession he had sat, haggard with sleepless anxiety, on a stiff-backed dining-room chair, till all danger was passed. But afterwards the baby had disappointed him sorely; and later she thought he came near actively disliking it. Still, reminding herself of the winsomeness of other children at the first awakening of intelligence, she waited with patient hopefulness, fondly fancying a beautiful boy-child; wide baby eyes; a delicious prattle. Claude, however, attained no prettiness, as he grew: from an unattractive baby he became an unattractive child, with lanky, carroty hair; a squat nose; an ugly, formless mouth. And in addition, he was fretful, mischievous, self-willed. Hillier at this time paid him but a perfunctory attention; avoided discussing him; and, when that was not possible, adopted a subtle, aggrieved tone that cut her to the quick. For she adored the child; adored him because he was hers; adored him for his very defects; adored him because of her own suppressed sadness; adored him for the prospect of the future—his education, his development, his gradual growth into manhood.

From the house in Cromwell Road the Haseltons had moved to a flat near Victoria Station: their means were moderate; but now, through the death of a relative, Hillier was no longer dependent upon literature for a living.

III

George Swann was her husband's cousin; and besides, he had stood godfather to the little Claude. He was the elder by eight years; but Hillier always treated him as if their ages were reversed, and, before Ella, used to nickname him the "Anglo-Saxon," because of his loose physical largeness, his flaxen hair and beard, his strong simplicity of nature. And Swann, with a reticent good-humour, acquiesced in Hillier's tone towards him; out of vague regard for his cousin's ability; out of respect for him as Ella's husband.

Swann and Ella were near friends. Since their first meeting, the combination of his blunt self-possession and his uncouth timidity with women, had attracted her. Divining his simplicity, she had felt at once at her ease with him, and, treating him with open cousinly friendliness, had encouraged him to come often to the house.

A while later, a trivial incident confirmed her regard for him. They had been one evening to the theatre together—she and Hillier and Swann—and afterwards, since it was raining, she and Hillier waited under the door-way while he sallied out into the Strand to find them a cab. Pushing his way along the crowded street, his eyes scanning the traffic for an empty hansom, he accidentally collided with a woman of the pavement, jostling her off the kerb into the mud of the gutter. Ella watched him stop, gaze ruefully at the woman's splashed skirt, take off his hat, and apologise with profuse, impulsive regret. The woman continued her walk, and presently passed the theatre door. She looked middle-aged: her face was hard and animal-like.

One Sunday afternoon—it was summer-time—as she was crossing the park to pay a call in Gloucester Square, she came across him sauntering alone in Kensington Gardens. She stopped and spoke to him: he seemed much startled to meet her. Three-quarters of an hour later, when she returned, he was sitting on a public bench beside her path; and immediately, from his manner, she half-guessed that he had been waiting for her. It was a fortnight after Claude's christening: he started to speak to her of the child, and so, talking together gravely, they turned on to the turf, mounted the slope, and sat down on two chairs beneath the trees.

Touched by his waiting for her, she was anxious to make friends with him; because he was the baby's godfather; because he seemed alone in the world; because she trusted in his goodness. So she led him, directly and indirectly, to talk of himself. At first, in moody embarrassment, he prodded the turf with his stick; and presently responded, unwillingly breaking down his troubled reserve, and alluding to his loneliness confidingly, as if sure of her sympathy.

Unconsciously he made her feel privileged thus to obtain an insight into the inner workings of his heart, and gave her a womanly, sentimental interest in him.

Comely cloud-billows were overhead, and there was not a breath of breeze.

They paused in their talk, and he spoke to her of Kensington Gardens, lovingly, as of a spot which had signified much to him in the past—Kensington Gardens, massively decorous; ceremoniously quiet; pompous, courtly as a king's leisure park; the slow, opulent contours of portly foliage, sober-green, immobile and indolent; spacious groupings of tree-trunks; a low ceiling of leaves; broad shadows mottling the grass. The Long Water, smooth and dark as a mirror ; lining its banks, the rhododendrons swelling with colour, cream, purple, and carmine. The peacock's insolent scream ; a silently skimming pigeon ; the joyous twitterings of birds ; the patient bleating of sheep. . . .

At last she rose to go. He accompanied her as far as the Albert Memorial, and when he had left her, she realised, with a thrill of contentment, that he and she had become friends.

IV

That had been the beginning of George Swann's great love for her. His was a slowly-moving nature : it was gradually therefore that he came to value, as a matter of almost sacred concern, the sense of her friendship ; reverencing her with the single-hearted, unquestioning reverence of a man unfamiliar with women ; regarding altogether gravely her relations with him—their talks on serious subjects, the little letters she wrote to him, the books that he had given to her—Swinburne's *Century of Roundels ;* a tiny edition of Shelley, bound in white parchment ; Mrs. Meynell's *Rhythm of Life.* He took to studying her intellectual tastes, the topics that were congenial to her, her opinions on men and women, with a quiet, plodding earnestness ; almost as if it were his duty. Thus he learned her love of simple country things ; gained a conception of her girlhood's home ; of her father and mother, staid country folk. He did not know how to him alone she could talk of these things ; or of the warm, deep-seated gratitude she bore him in consequence ; but he reverted constantly to the topic, because, under its influence, she always brightened, and it seemed to ratify the bond of sympathy between them.

How much, as the months went by, she came to mean to him, he had not in the least realised: he had never thought of her as playing a part in his own life; only as a beautiful-natured woman, to whom he owed everything, because, by some strange chance, she had made him her friend.

Not even in his moments of idle vagrant reverie, did he think to ask more of her than this. To intrude himself further into her life, to offer her more than exactly that which she was expecting of him, naturally never occurred to him. Yet, in a queer uncomfortable way, he was jealous of other men's familiarity with her—vaguely jealous lest they should supplant him, mistrustful of his own modesty. And there was no service which, if she had asked it of him, he would not have accomplished for her sake; for he had no ties.

But towards Hillier, since he belonged to her, Swann's heart warmed affectionately: she had loved and married him; had made him master of her life. So he instinctively extended to his cousin a portion of the unspoken devotion inspired by Ella. Such was the extent of his reverence for her, and his diffidence regarding himself, that he took for granted that Hillier was an ideal husband, tender, impelled by her to no ordinary daily devotion: for, that it should be otherwise, would have seemed to him a monstrous improbability. Yet latterly, since the coming of Hillier's success, certain incidents had disconcerted him, filled him with ill-defined uneasiness.

From the first, he had been one of Hillier's warmest admirers; praising, whenever an opportunity offered, out of sheer loyalty to Ella, and pride in his cousin, the fineness of form that his poetry revealed. To her, when they were alone, he had talked in the same enthusiastic strain: the first time she had seemed listless and tired, and afterwards he had blamed himself for his want of tact; on another occasion, he had brought her a laudatory article, and she had turned the conversation brusquely into another channel. And, since his love for her—of which as yet he was himself unconscious—caused him to brood over means of pleasing her (he lived alone in the Temple), this indication that he had jarred her sensibilities was not lost upon him.

Hillier's attitude towards the little Claude, and the pain that it was causing her, would in all probabiltity have escaped him, had she not alluded to it once openly, frankly assuming that he had perceived it. It was not indeed that she was in any way tempted to indulge in the transitional treachery of discussing Hillier with him; but that, distressed, yearning for counsel, she was prompted almost irresistibly to turn to Swann, who had stood godfather to the child, who was ready to join her in forming anxious speculations concerning the future.

For of course he had extended his devotion to the child also, who, at Hillier's suggestion, was taught to call him Uncle George. Naturally his heart went out to children: the little Claude, since the first awakening of his intelligence, had exhibited a freakish, childish liking for him; and, in his presence, always assumed something of the winsomeness of other children.

The child's preference for Swann, his shy mistrust of his father, were sometimes awkwardly apparent; but Hillier, so it seemed to Ella, so far from resenting, readily accepted his cousin's predominance. "Children always instinctively know a good man," he would say; and Ella would wince inwardly, discerning, beneath his air of complacent humility, how far apart from her he had come to stand.

Thus, insensibly, Swann had become necessary to her, almost the pivot, as it were, of her life: to muse concerning the nature of his feelings towards her, to probe its sentimental aspects, to accept his friendship otherwise than with unconscious ease, that was not her way.

But Hillier noted critically how things were drifting, and even lent encouragement to their progress in a way that was entirely unostentatious; since so cynical an attitude seemed in some measure to justify his own conduct.

V

For he was unfaithful to his wife. It was inevitable that the temptation, in the guise of a craving for change, should come—not from the outside, but from within himself. And he had no habit of stable purpose with which to withstand it. Not altogether was it a vagrant, generalised lusting after women other than his wife; not a mere harking back to the cruder experiences of his bachelorhood; though, at first it had seemed so to manifest itself. Rather was it the result of a moody restlessness, of a dissatisfaction (with her, consciously, no; for the more that he sinned against her, the more lovable, precious her figure appeared to him) kindled by continual contact with her natural goodness. It was as if, in his effort to match his personality with hers, he had put too severe a strain upon the better part of him.

He himself had never analysed the matter more exhaustively than this. The treacherous longing had gripped him at certain moments, holding him helpless as in a vice. He had conceived no reckless passion for another woman: such an eventuality, he dimly surmised, was well-nigh impossible. In his case brain domineered over heart; to meet the first outbursting of his adoration for his wife, he had drained every resource of his sentimentality.

Was it then an idle craving for adventure, a school-boy curiosity clamouring for fresh insight into the heart of women? Mere experience was unnecessary for the attainment of comprehension: "to have lived" did not imply "to have understood": the most pregnant adventures, as he knew, were those which entailed no actual unfaithfulness.

And for these—subtle, psychological intimacies—ample occasion offered. Yet the twist in his nature led him to profess to treat them heedlessly; and, in reality, to prosecute them with no genuine strenuousness. They would have been obvious lapses; Ella would have been pained, pitied perhaps: from that his vanity and his sham chivalry alike shrank.

His unfaithfulness to her, then, had been prompted by no evident motive. Superficially considered, it seemed altogether gratuitous, meaningless. The world—that is, people who knew him and her—would probably have discredited the story, had it come to be bruited. And this fact he had not omitted to consider.

She, the other woman, was of little importance. She belonged to the higher walks of the demi-monde: she was young; beautiful, too, in a manner; light-hearted; altogether complaisant. She was not the first: there had been others before her; but these were of no account whatsoever: they had but represented the bald fact of his unfaithfulness. But *she* attracted him: he returned to her again and again; though afterwards, at any rate in the beginning, he was wont to spare himself little in the matter of self-reproach, and even to make some show of resisting the temptation. The discretion of her cynical camaraderie, however, was to be trusted; and that was sufficient to undermine all virtuous resolution. She had the knack, too, of cheering him when depressed, and, curiously enough, of momentarily reinstating him in his own conceit, though later, on his return to Ella, he would suffer most of the pangs of remorse.

There was something mannish about her—not about her physiognomy, but about her mind—derived, no doubt, from the scantiness of her intercourse with women. Her cynicism was both human and humorous: she was a person of little education, and betrayed none of the conventionality of her class: hence her point of view often struck him as oddly direct and unexpected. He used to talk to her about himself, candidly discussing all manner of random and intimate matters before her, without shyness on his part, without surprise on hers—almost at times as if she were not present—and with an assumption of facile banter, to listen to which tickled his vanity. Only to Ella did he never allude; and in this, of course, she tacitly acquiesced. She possessed a certain quality of sympathetic tact; always attentive to his talk, never critical of it; mindful of all that he had previously recounted. He could always resume his attitude at the very point where he had abandoned it. Between them there was never any aping of sentimentality.

That she comprehended him—with so fatuous a delusion he never coquetted: nor that she interested him as a curious type. She saw no subtle significance in his talk: she understood nothing of its complex promptings: she was ordinary, uneducated, and yet stimulating—and that was the contrast which attracted him towards her. Concerning the course of her own existence he did not trouble himself: he accepted her as he found her; deriving a sense of security from the fact that towards him her manner varied but little from visit to visit. But, as these accumulated, becoming more and more regular, and his faith in her discretion blunted the edge of his remorse, he came to notice how she braced him, reconciled him to his treachery (which, he argued, in any case was inevitable); lent to it a spice almost of pleasantness. Neither had he misgivings of the future, of how it would end. One day she would pass out of his life as easily as she had come into it. His relations with her were odd, though not in the obvious way. About the whole thing he was insensibly coming to feel composed.

And its smoothness, its lack of a disquieting aspect, impelled him to persevere towards Ella in cheerfulness, courteous kindness, and a show of continuous affection; and to repent altogether of those lapses into roughness which had marred the first months of their marriage.

VI

The hansoms whirled their yellow, gleaming eyes down West: hot, flapping gusts went and returned aimlessly; and the mirthless twitterings of the women fell abruptly on the sluggishly shuffling crowd. All the sin of the city seemed crushed to listlessness; vacantly wistful, the figures waited by the street corners.

Then the storm burst. Slow, ponderous drops: a clap of the thunder's wrath; a crinkled rim of light, unveiling a slab of sky, throbbing, sullen and violet; small, giggling screams of alarm, and a stampede of bunchy silhouettes. The thunder clapped again, impatient and imperious; and the rain responded, zealously hissing. Bright stains of liquid gold straggled across the roadway; a sound of splashing accompanied the thud of hoofs, the rumble of wheels, the clanking of chains, and the ceaseless rattle of the drops on the hurried procession of umbrellas.

Swann, from the corner of a crowded omnibus, peered absently through the doorway, while the conductor, leaning into the street, touted mechanically for passengers.

The vehicle stopped. A woman, bare-headed and cloaked, escorted by the umbrella of a restaurant official, hurried to the shelter of a cab, across the wet pavement. A man broke the stream of the hastening crowd; halted beside the wheel to stare. The woman laughed in recognition, noisily. The man stepped rapidly on to the foot-board, and an instant stood there, directing the driver across the roof. The light from a lamp-post caught his face: it was Hillier. The next moment he was seated beside the woman, who was still laughing (Swann could see the gleaming whiteness of her teeth): the driver had loosened the window strap, the glass had slid down, shutting them in. The omnibus jolted forward, and the cab followed in its wake, impatiently, for the street was blocked with traffic.

Immediately, with a fierce vividness, Ella's image sprang up before Swann's eyes—her face with all its pure, natural, simple sweetness. And there—not ten yards distant, behind the obscurity of that blurred glass, Hillier was sitting with another woman—a woman concerning whose status he could not doubt.

He clenched his gloved fists. The wild impulse spurted forth, the impulse to drag the cur from the cab, to bespatter him, to throw him into the mud, to handle him brutally, as he deserved. It was as if Hillier had struck him a cowardly blow in the face.

Then the hansom started to creep past the omnibus. Swann sprang into the roadway. A moment later he was inside another cab, whirling in pursuit down Piccadilly hill.

The horse's hoofs splashed with a rhythmical, accelerated precision: he noticed dully how the crupper-strap flapped from side to side, across the animal's back. Ahead, up the incline, pairs of tiny specks, red and green, were flitting.

"It's the cab with the lady what come out of the restaurant, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes," Swann called back through the trap.

The reins tightened: the horse quickened his trot.

Hyde Park Corner stood empty and resplendent with a glitter of glamorous gold. The cab turned the corner of Hamilton Place, and the driver lashed the horse into a canter up Park Lane.

"That's 'im--jest in front——"

"All right. Follow." Swann heard himself answering. And, amid his pain, he was conscious that's the man's jaunty tone seemed to indicate that this sort of job was not unfamiliar.

He struggled to tame the savageness of his indignation; to think out the situation; to realise things coolly, that he might do what was best for her. But the leaping recollection of all her trustfulness, her goodness, filled him with a burning, maddening compassion. . . . He could see nothing but the great wrong done to her. . . .

Where were they going—the green lights of that cab in front—that woman and Hillier? . . . Where would it end, this horrible pursuit—this whirling current which was sweeping him forward. . . . It was like a nightmare. . . .

He must stop them—prevent this thing . . . but, evidently, this was not the first time. . . . Hillier and this woman knew one another. He had stopped, on catching sight of her, and she had recognised him. . . . The thing might have been going on for weeks—for months. . . .

. . . Yet he must stop them—not here, in the crowded street (they were in the Edgware Road), but later, when they had reached their destination—where there were no passers—where it could be done without scandal. . . .

. . . Yes, he must send Hillier back to her. . . . And she believed in him—trusted him. . . . She must know nothing—at all costs, he must spare her the hideous knowledge—the pain of it. . . . And yet—and yet? . . . Hillier—the blackguard—she would have to go on living with him, trusting him, confiding in him, loving him. . . .

And for relief he returned wearily to his indignation.

How was it possible for any man—married to her—to be so vile, so false? . . . The consummate hypocrisy of it all. . . .

Swann remembered moments when Hillier's manner towards her had appeared redolent of deference, of suppressed affection. And he—a man of refinement—not a mere coarse-fibred, sensual brute—he who wrote poetry—Swann recalled a couplet full of fine aspiration—that he should have done this loathsome thing—done it callously, openly—any one might have seen it—deceived her for some common vulgar, public creature. . . .

Suddenly the cab halted abruptly.

"They're pulled up, across the street there," the driver whispered hoarsely, confidentially; and for his tone Swann could have struck him.

It was an ill-lit street, silent and empty. The houses were low, semi-detached, and separated from the pavement by railings and small gardens.

The woman had got out of the cab and was pushing open the swing-gate. Hillier stood on the foot-board, paying the cabman. Swann, on the opposite side of the street, hesitated. Hillier stepped on to the pavement, and ran lightly up the doorstep after the woman. She unlocked the door: it closed behind them. And the hansom which had brought them turned, and trotted away down the street.

Swann stood a moment before the house, irresolute. Then recrossed the street slowly. And a hansom, bearing a second couple, drew up at the house next door.

VII

"You can go to bed, Hodgson. I will turn off the light."

The man retired silently. It was a stage-phrase that rose unconsciously to her lips, a stage-situation with which she was momentarily toying.

Alone, she perceived its absurd unreality. Nothing, of course, would happen to-night: though so many days and nights she had been waiting. The details of life was clumsy, cumbersome: the simplification of the stage, of novels, of dozing dreams, seemed, by contrast, bitterly impossible.

She took up the book again, and read on, losing herself for a while in the passion of its pages—a passion that was all glamorous, sentimental felicity, at once vague and penetrating. But, as she paused to reach a paper-knife, she remembered the irrevocable, prosaic groove of existence, and that slow drifting to a dreary commonplace—a commonplace that was *hers*—brought back all her aching listlessness. She let the book slip to the carpet.

Love, she repeated to herself, a silken web, opal-tinted, veiling all life; love, bringing fragrance and radiance; love with the moonlight streaming across the meadows; love, amid summer-leafed woods, a-sparkle in the morning sun; a simple clasping of hands; a happiness, child-like and thoughtless, secure and intimate. . . .

And she—she had nothing—only the helpless child; her soul was brave and dismantled and dismal; and once again started the gnawing of humiliation—inferior even to the common people, who could be loved and forget, in the midst of promiscuous squalor. Without love, there seemed no reason for life.

Away her thoughts sailed to the tale of the fairy-prince, stepping to shore in his silver armour, come to deliver and to love. She would have been his in all humility, waited on him in fearful submission; she would have asked for nought but his love.

Years ago, once or twice, men had appeared to her like that. And Hillier, before they were married, when they were first engaged. A strange girl she must have been in those days! And now—now they were like any husband and any wife.

"It happened by chance," the old tale began. Chance! Yes, it was chance that governed all life; mocking, ironical chance, daintily sportive chance, hobbled to the clumsy mechanism of daily existence.

Twelve o'clock struck. Ten minutes more perhaps, and Hillier would be home. She could hear his tread; she could see him enter, take off his coat and gloves gracefully, then lift her face lightly in his two hands, and kiss her on the forehead. He would ask for an account of her day's doings; but he would never heed her manner of answering, for he would have begun to talk of himself. And altogether complacently would he take up the well-worn threads of their common life.

And she would go on waiting, and trifling with hopelessness, for in real life such things were impossible. Men were dull and incomplete, and could not understand a woman's heart. . . .

And so she would wait till he came in, and when he had played his part, just as she had imagined he would play it, she would follow him, in dumb docility, up-stairs to bed.

* * * * *

It was past one o'clock when he appeared. She had fallen asleep in the big arm-chair: her book lay in a heap on the carpet beside her. He crossed the room, but she did not awake.

One hand hung over the arm of the chair, limp and white and fragile; her head, bent over her breast, was coyly resting in the curve of her elbow; her hair was a little dishevelled; her breathing was soft and regular, like a child's.

He sat down noiselessly, awed by this vision of her. The cat, which had lain stretched on the hearth-rug, sprang into his lap, purring and caressing. He thought it strange that animals had no sense of human sinfulness, and recalled the devotion of the dog of a prostitute, whom he had known years and years ago. . . .

He watched her, and her unconsciousness loosed within him the sickening pangs of remorse. . . . He mused vaguely on suicide as the only fitting termination. . . . And he descended to cheap anathemas upon life. . . .

* * * * *

By-and-by she awoke, opening her eyes slowly, wonderingly. He was kneeling before her, kissing her hand with reverential precaution.

She saw tears in his eyes: she was still scarcely awake: she made no effort to comprehend; only was impulsively grateful, and slipping her arms behind his head, drew him towards her and kissed him on the eyes. He submitted, and a tear moistened her lips.

Then they went up-stairs.

And she, passionately clutching at every memory of their love, feverishly cheated herself into bitter self-upbraiding, into attributing to him a nobility of nature that set him above all other men. And he, at each renewed outburst of her wild straining towards her ideal, suffered, as if she had cut his bare flesh with a whip.

It was his insistent attitude of resentful humility that finally wearied her of the fit of false exaltation. When she sank to sleep, the old ache was at her heart.

VIII

Swann strode into the room. Hillier looked up at him from his writing-table in unfeigned surprise; greeted him cordially, with a couple of trite, cheery remarks concerning the weather, then waited abruptly for an explanation of this morning visit; for Swann's trouble was written on his face.

"You look worried. Is there anything wrong?" Hillier asked presently.

"Yes."

"Well, can I do anything? If I can be of any service to you, old fellow, you know I——"

"I discovered last night what a damned blackguard you are." He spoke savagely, as if his bluntness exulted him: his tone quivered with suppressed passion.

Hillier, with a quick movement of his head, flinched as if he had been struck in the face. And the lines about his mouth were set rigidly.

There was a long, tense silence. Hillier was drawing circles on a corner of the blotting-pad; Swann was standing over him, glaring at him with a fierce, hateful curiosity. Hillier became conscious of the other's expression, and his fist clenched obviously.

"I saw you get into a cab with that woman," Swann went on. "I was in an omnibus going home. I followed you—drove after you. I wanted to stop you—to stop it—I was too late."

"Ah!" An exasperated, sneering note underlined the exclamation. Hillier drove the pen-point into the table. The nib curled and snapped.

The blood rushed to Swann's forehead. In a flash he caught a glimpse of the thought that had crossed Hillier's mind. It was like a personal indignity; he struggled desperately to control himself.

Hillier looked straight into his cousin's distorted face. At the sight the tightness about his own mouth slackened. His composure returned.

"I'm sorry. Forgive me," he said simply.

"How can you be such a brute?" Swann burst out unheeding. "Don't you care? Is it nothing to you to wreck your wife's whole happiness—to spoil her life, to break her heart, to deceive her in the foulest way, to lie to her. Haven't you any conscience, any chivalry?"

The manly anguish in his voice was not lost upon Hillier. He thought he realised clearly how it was for Ella, and not for him, that Swann was so concerned. Once more he took stock of his cousin's agitation, and a quick glitter came into his eyes. He felt as if a mysterious force had been suddenly given to him. Still he said nothing.

"How could you, Hillier? How came you to do it?"

"Sit down." He spoke coldly, clearly, as if he were playing a part which he knew well.

Swann obeyed mechanically.

"It's perfectly natural that you should speak to me like that. You take the view of the world. The view of the world I accept absolutely. Certainly I am utterly unworthy of Ella" (he mentioned her name with a curious intonation of assertive pride). "How I have sunk to this thing—the whole story of how I have come to risk my whole happiness for the sake of another woman, who is nothing—absolutely nothing—to me, to whom I am nothing, I won't attempt to explain. Did I attempt to do so, I see little probability of your understanding it, and little to be gained even if you did so. I choose to let it remain for you a piece of incomprehensible infamy: I have no wish to alter your view of me."

"You don't care . . . you've no remorse . . . you're callous and cynical. . . . Good God! it's awful."

"Yes, Swann, I care," Hillier resumed, lowering his voice, and speaking with a slow distinctness, as if he were putting an excessive restraint upon his emotions. "I care more than you or any one will ever know."

"It's horrible. . . . I don't know what to think. . . . Don't you see the awfulness of your wife's position? . . . Don't you realise the hideousness of what you've done?"

"My dear Swann, nobody is more alive to the consequences of what I've done than I am. I have behaved infamously—I don't need to be told that by you. And whatever comes to me out of this thing" (he spoke with a grave, resigned sadness) "I shall bear it."

"Good God! Can you think of nothing but yourself? Can't you see that you've been a miserable, selfish beast—that what happens to you matters nothing? Can't you see that the only thing that matters is your wife? You're a miserable, skulking cur—— . . . She trusted you—she believed in you, and you've done her an almost irreparable wrong."

Hillier stood suddenly erect.

"What I have done, Swann, is more than a wrong. It is a crime. Within an hour of your leaving this room, I shall have told Ella everything. That is the only thing left for me to do, and I shall not shirk it. I shall take the full responsibility. You did right to come to me as you did. You are right to consider me a miserable, skulking cur" (he brought the words out with an emphasised bravery). "Now you can do no more. The remainder of the matter rests between me and my wife——"

He paused.

"And to think that you——" Swann began passionately.

"There is no object to be gained by our discussing the matter further," Hillier interrupted a little loudly, but with a concentrated calm. "There is no need for you to remain here longer." He put his thumb to the electric bell.

"The maid will be here in a moment to show you out," he added.

Swann waited, blinking with hesitation. His personality seemed to be slipping from him.

"You are going to tell her?" he repeated slowly.

The door opened: he hurried out of the room.

The outer door slammed: Hillier's face turned a sickly white; his eyes dilated, and he laughed excitedly—a low, short, hysterical laugh. He looked at the clock: the whole scene had lasted but ten minutes. He pulled a chair to the fire, and sat staring at the flames moodily. . . . The tension of the dramatic situation snapped. Before his new prospect, once again he thought weakly of suicide. . . .

IX

He had told her—not, of course, the whole story—from that his sensitivity had shrunk. Still he had besmirched himself bravely; he had gone through with the interview not without dignity. Beforehand he had nerved himself for a terrible ordeal; yet, somehow, as he reviewed it, now that it was all over, the scene seemed to have fallen flat. The tragedy of her grief, of his own passionate repentance, which he had been expecting, had proved unaccountably tame. She had cried, and at the sight of those tears of hers he had suffered intensely; but she had displayed no suppressed, womanish jealousy; had not, in her despair, appeared to regard his confession as an overwhelming shattering of her faith in him, and so provoked him to reveal the depth of his anguish. He had implored her forgiveness; he had vowed he would efface the memory of his treachery; she had acquiesced dreamily, with apparent heroism. There had been no mention of a separation.

And now the whole thing was ended: to-night he and she were dining out.

He was vaguely uncomfortable; yet his heart was full of a sincere repentance, because of the loosening of the strain of his anxiety; because of the smarting sense of humiliation, when he recollected Swann's words; because he had caused her to suffer in a queer, inarticulate way, which he did not altogether understand, of which he was vaguely afraid. . . .

X

When at last he had left her alone, it was with a curious calmness that she started to reflect upon it all. She supposed it was very strange that his confession had not wholly prostrated her; and glancing furtively backwards, catching a glimpse of her old girlish self, wondered listlessly how it was that, insensibly, all these months, she had grown so hardened. . . .

* * * * *

By-and-by, the recent revelation of his unfaithfulness seemed to recede slowly into the misty past, and, fading, losing its sharpness

ness of outline, its distinctness of detail, to resemble an irreparable fact to which familiarity had inured her.

And all the uneasiness of her mistrustfulness, and pain of her fluctuating doubtings ceased; her comprehension of him was all at once clarified, rendered vivid and indisputable; and she was conscious of a certain sense of relief. She was eased of those feverish, spasmodic gaspings of her half-starved love; at first the dulness of sentimental atrophy seemed the more endurable. She jibed at her own natural artlessness; and insisted to herself that she wanted no fool's paradise, that she was even glad to see him as he really was, to terminate, once for all, this futile folly of love; that, after all, his unfaithfulness was no unusual and terrible tragedy, but merely a commonplace chapter in the lives of smiling, chattering women, whom she met at dinners, evening parties, and balls. . . .

* * * * *

There were some who simpered to her over Hillier as a model of modern husbands; and she must go on listening and smiling. . . .

. . . And the long years ahead would unroll themselves—a slow tale of decorous lovelessness. . . .

He would be always the same—that was the hardest to face. His nature could never alter, grow into something different . . . never, never change . . . always, always the same. . . .

Oh! it made her dread it all—the restless round of social enjoyments; the greedy exposure of the petty weaknesses of common acquaintance; the ill-natured atmosphere that she felt emanating from people herded together. . . . All the details of her London life looked unreal, mean, pitiful. . . .

And she longed after the old days of her girlhood, of the smooth, staid country life; she longed after the simple, restful companionship

ship of her old father and mother ; after the accumulation of little incidents that she had loved long ago. . . . She longed too—and the straining at heart-strings grew tenser—she longed after her own lost maidenhood ; she longed to be ignorant and careless ; to see life once again as a simple, easy matter ; to know nothing of evil ; to understand nothing of men ; to trust—to trust unquestioningly. . . . All that was gone ; she herself was all changed ; those days could never come again. . . .

And she cried to herself a little, from weakness of spirit, softly. . . .

* * * * *

Then, gradually, out of the weary turmoil of her bitterness, there came to her a warm impulse of vague sympathy for the countless, unknown tragedies at work around her ; she thought of the sufferings of outcast women—of loveless lives, full of mirthless laughter ; she thought of the long loneliness of childless women. . . .

She clutched for consolation at the unhappiness of others ; but she only discovered the greater ugliness of the world. And she returned to a tired contemplation of her own prospect. . . .

* * * * *

He had broken his vows to her—not only the solemn vow he had taken in the church (she recalled how his voice had trembled with emotion as he had repeated the words)—but all that passionate series of vows he had made to her during the spring-time of their love. . . .

. . . Yes, that seemed the worst part of it—that, and not the making love to another woman. . . . What was she like ? . . . What was it in her that had attracted him ? . . . Oh ! but what did that matter ? . . . —only why were men's natures so different from women's ? . . .

. . . Now, she must go on—go on alone. Since her marriage she had lost the habit of daily converse with Christ: here in London, somehow, He had seemed so distant, so difficult of approach. . . .

. . . She must just go on. . . . She had the little Claude. . . . It was to help her that God had given her Claude. . . . Oh! she would pray to God to make him good—to give him a straight, strong, upright, honest nature. And herself, every day, she would watch over his growth, guide him, teach him. . . . Yes, he *must* grow up good . . . into boyhood . . . different from other boys . . . into manhood, simple, honourable manhood. . . . She would be everything to him: he and she would come to comprehend each other, to read into each other's hearts. . . . Perhaps, between them, would spring up perfect love and trust. . . .

XI

Swann had written to her:

"You are in trouble: let me come."

Gradually, between the lines of the note, she understood it all—she read how his love for her had leapt up, now that he knew that she was unhappy; how he wanted to be near her, to comfort her, and perhaps . . . perhaps . . .

She was filled with great sorrow for him—and warm gratitude, too, for his simple, single-hearted love—but sorrow, that she could give him nothing in return, and because it seemed that, somehow, he and she were about to bid one another good-bye; she thought she dimly foresaw how their friendship was doomed to dwindle. . . .

So she let him come.

* * * * *

. . . And all this she fancied she read again in the long, grave glance of his greeting, and the firm clasp of his big hand.

When he spoke, his deep, steady voice dominated her : she knew at once that he would do what was right.

"Ella, my poor Ella, how brave you are!" She looked up at him, smiling tremulously, through her quick-starting tears. . . . The next moment it was as if the words had escaped him—almost as if he regretted them.

He sat down opposite her, and, lightening his voice, asked—just as he always did—for news of the little Claude.

And so their talk ran on.

After awhile, she came to realise that he meant to say no more : the strength of his great reserve became apparent, and a sense of peace stole over her. He talked on, and to the restful sound of his clear, strong voice, she abandoned herself dreamily. . . . This he had judged the better course. . . . that he should have adopted any other now seemed inconceivable. Beside him she felt weak and helpless : she remembered the loneliness of his life : he seemed to her altogether noble ; and she was vaguely remorseful that she had not perceived from the first that it was from him that her help would come. . . .

She divined, too, the fineness of his sacrifice—that manly, human struggle with himself, through which he had passed to attain it—how he had longed for the right to make her his . . . and how he had renounced. The sureness of his victory, and the hidden depths of his nature which it revealed awed her . . . now he would never swerve from what he knew to be right. . . . And on, through those years to come, she could trust him, always, always. . . .

. . . At last he bade her good-bye : even at the last his tone remained unchanged.

It was close upon seven o'clock. She went upstairs to dress for dinner, and kneeling beside the bed, prayed to God with an outburst of passionate, pulsing joy. . . .

Ten minutes later Hillier came in from his dressing-room. He clasped his hands round her bare neck, kissing her hair again and again.

"I have been punished, Nellie," he began in a broken whisper. "Good God! it is hard to bear. . . . Help me, Nellie, . . . help me to bear it."

She unclasped his fingers, and started to stroke them; a little mechanically, as if it were her duty to ease him of his pain. . . .

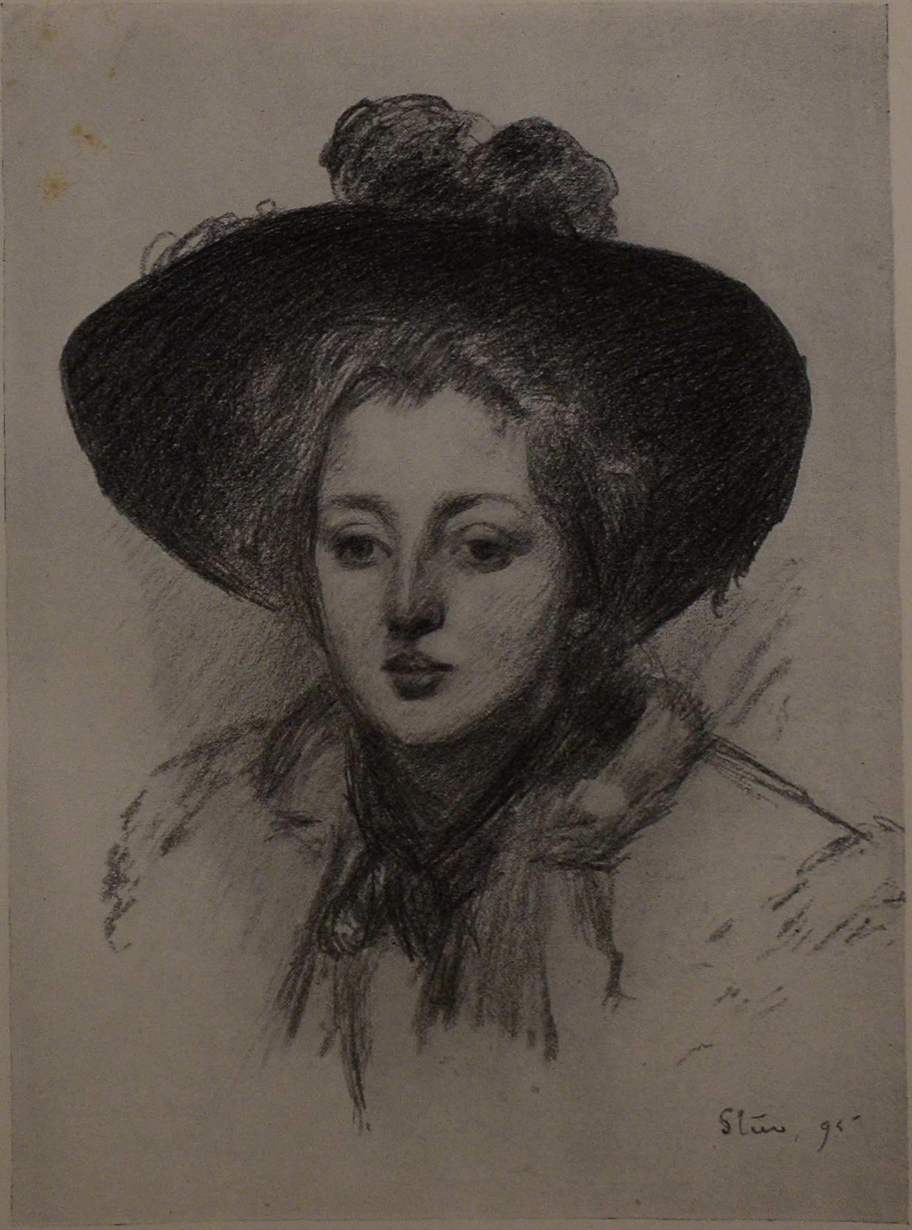
Three Pictures

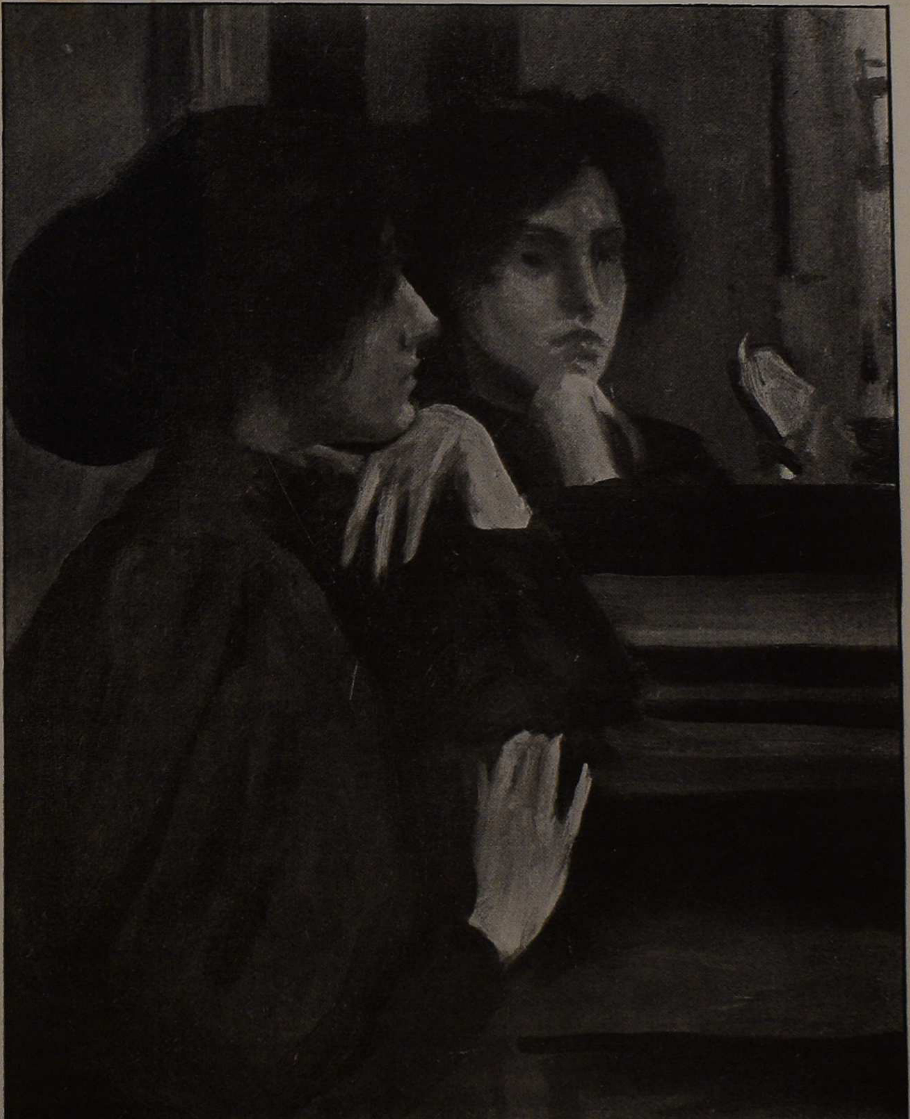
By P. Wilson Steer

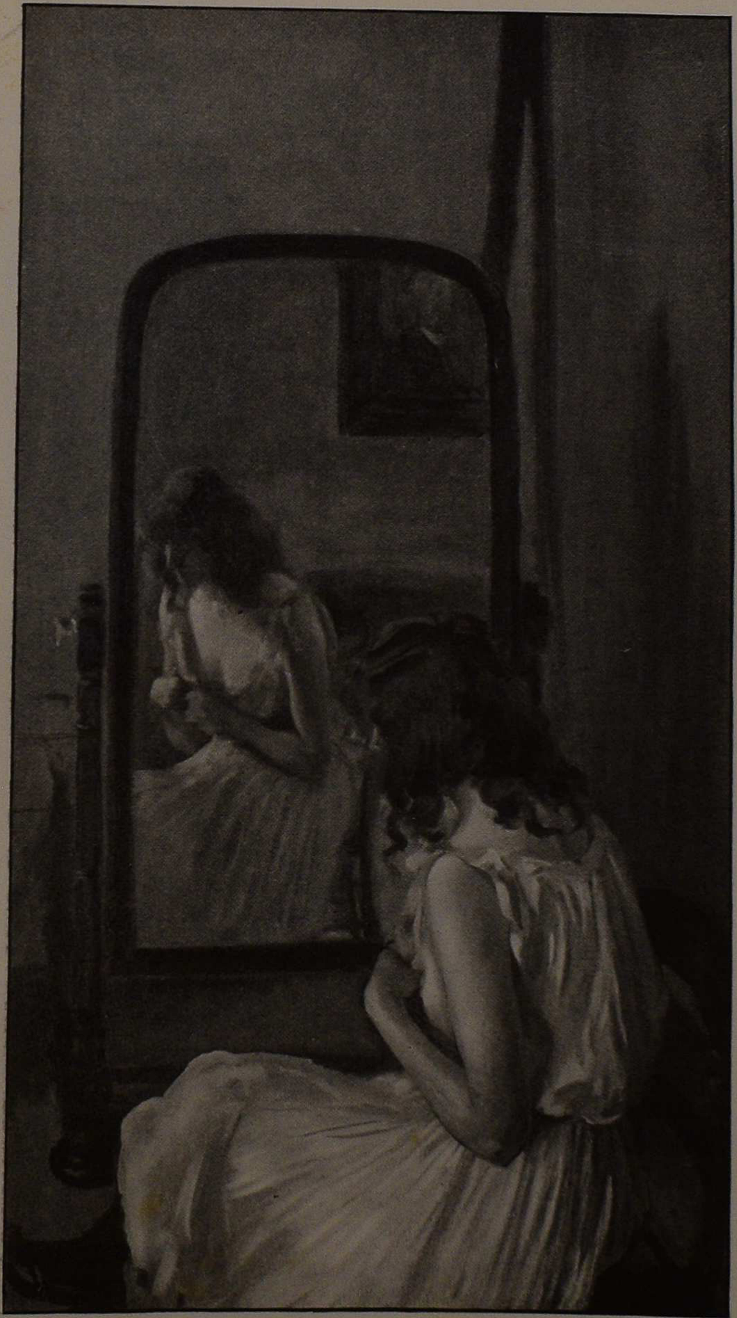
I. Portrait of Mrs. James Welch

II. The Mantelpiece

III. The Mirror


Steer, 95





Perennial

By Ernest Wentworth

SHE asked her lover, smiling, "If one blend
  Two sweet sounds in a perfect symphony,
Or two harmonious colours till they lend
  A selfsame hue,—tell me, what alchemy
  Can part them after? . . . So myself and thee,
My life and thine, fast mingled, nought can rend
Asunder ever."—Nay, but hear the end.

The lovers' lives, sometime thus wholly one,—
  One in minds' thought, hearts' wish, and bodies' breath,—
Now singly such far-severed courses run
  As if each had survived the other's death.
  Oh, sad strange thing! Yet, as the Wise Man saith,
There is no new thing underneath the sun.
How early, then, were such sad things begun!

"For Ever and Ever"

By C. S.

In the cold grey dawn I sit up and look at the woman by my side. One soft little white hand peeps out from the dainty lace, and on one finger is a gold ring. There is just such another upon my own finger; and these two rings bind us to one another for ever and ever. And I am tired already.

She moves in her sleep, and buries her face deeper in the heavy folds of the bed-clothes. The little hand is still out, and lies so near me (so temptingly near, as I should have thought only a little while ago) that I can trace the faint blue lines in it as I have done many a time before. But now . . . how horrible it all seems!

She stirs again, and draws the hand into the lace so that it is almost hidden. How pretty she looks! . . . with her silky brown hair. Ah, why do I find it so difficult to think of her, even when she is before my eyes thus? Why do I never think of her when she is absent? Why do great masses of tumbling black hair come into my mind, while I watch this soft brown tangle on the pillow before me? I have tried to beat down these thoughts—but they will come . . . and how can I help myself?

Look at her neck—how white it is! And yet—and yet, why does a warm brown something continually haunt me? A living something which brings with it the sun, the sky, and the sea?

Our boy sleeps in a little room adjoining. I creep in and look at him. He is asleep, and has curled himself up almost into a ball, with one tiny fist in his mouth. I dare not move it to give him more air, lest he should wake and cry out. As I look a horrible feeling of loneliness comes over me. . . . He is *her* child . . . *our* child . . . I creep back to bed. Thank Heaven her eyes are shut ! . . . Those eyes so solemn and blue.

And in the morning she tells me a curious dream she had last night. And this is it :

"I dreamed that a dark woman with wonderful black hair came and stood by our bed ; and stooping, put her arms about you and kissed you passionately many times, smoothing your forehead with her hand. And I tried to cry out, but could not from fear. And suddenly looking up, she saw me watching her ; and her face grew hard and cruel. And she came round, and stood and looked at me ; and I trembled. And presently taking hold of me, she tried to pull me out of bed, but something held me down : and she gave up, and went and sat by the dull cold grate, and wept bitterly. And I felt sorry for her in spite of all, because she had no one to comfort her as I have : and I got up to go to her. But the cruel hard look crept back into her face—and then I woke, and saw you, and the empty chair, and the bright sunlight darting round the edges of the blinds, and found it was only a dream."

And what can I say ? . . . What can I do ? . . . How can I help myself ? . . .

Mr. Meredith in Little

By G. S. Street

I

In addition to its possible concealment of irrelevant motives, anonymous criticism has this certain advantage, that it is not of necessity ridiculous. When the anonymous critic is confronted with such a question as that put, a trifle rudely but quite conclusively, by Charles Lamb to Dr. Nott—"You think: who are you?" "I," he may answer proudly, "am *The North Boreshire Inquisitor*." Being that, he may go on to protect the interests of our hearths and homes, or to point out the approaching end of the century, without danger of seeming superfluous or impertinent. To do these things is felt to be part of the duty of *The North Boreshire Inquisitor*. But when Jones—I hope nobody is really called Jones—implies a supposition that the world will be glad to read what he, Jones, thinks of some great contemporary, he runs a risk of humorous eyebrows. Even when the critic is somebody whose name is a household word for eminence, one of those distinguished few before whom generations of intruders have trembled or basked, and the criticised only "a Mr." So-and-so—there is a deal of national character in that use of the indefinite article—one suspects that the judgment, however instructive, has in it some possibility of the absurd. And it may be supposed that if a beginner in the dodge of scribbling should essay to estimate the greatest among living writers in his country, the proceeding would be something worse than ridiculous.

But it may be argued that such a critic would be in a less obnoxious position than any other. If he had a mind to patronise, somebody might be amused and nobody could be hurt; whereas the patronage of a superior rankles, and that of an inferior is not to be borne. Or if he set out to damn, it would be nothing; but your eminent critic, sitting heavily upon a writhing novice, has an air of cruel exclusiveness.

For such reasons as these, I have far less diffidence in making Mr. Meredith's last published book a little more than the starting-point of a few digressions, than I should have in criticising Mr. Max Beerbohm: I name, for example, an author whose works are of a later date and even less in bulk than my own. I should fear the satire of Mr. Beerbohm's eulogists or detractors: from Mr. Meredith's, I may hope for indulgent indifference. I was compelled in my youth to weigh the philosophers of ancient Greece in the balance of my critical intelligence, and I began to read Mr. Meredith at about the time I was deciding the comparative qualities of Plato and Aristotle. To me he was, and is, as much a classic as they: I approach him with as little personal feeling, and if I have to say that all of him is not, in my apprehension, equally good, I can say it with as little disrespect.

II

The Tale of Chloe and other Stories gives you Mr. Meredith in little. In *The House on the Beach* you have him, as it were, in his bones. In *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper* you have him alive and imperfect. In *The Tale of Chloe* you have him consummate.

If Mr. Meredith were one of those sympathetic writers who can write only when they are drunk—and is not art life as expressed by a finely drunken intelligence?—I should think he wrote *The House on the Beach* after a surfeit of tea. The apprehension, the phrase and the mechanism of conveyance are there; the quickening fire, the "*that*," as Sir Joshua Reynolds said, is absent. "You *shall* live" Mr. Meredith seems to have said to his potential puppets, and so they live—under protest. As has happened before, when lack of customary inspiration has been felt, he seems to have tried, in over-vehement self-justification, to do what the fullest inspiration had hardly made possible. He has offered you a caprice of feminine emotion more incredible than is to be found in any other of his books. A middle-aged man, grotesquely vulgar and abnormally mean-minded, asks, as his price for not exposing an old friend, this old friend's daughter to wife. The daughter, having set herself to make the sacrifice, had to find in this treacherous cad, Tinman, some human merit for her comfort, and for a prop of her obstinacy towards a seemlier wooer. She found it in the fact that Tinman, being knocked down by her father, did not return the blow. "She had conceived an insane idea of nobility in Tinman that blinded her to his face, figure, and character—his manners, likewise. He had forgiven a blow! . . . Tinman's magnanimity was present in her imagination to sustain her." The play of emotional fancy which follows on this motive is delightful to read, and you are fain to be persuaded, for your enjoyment, of its truth; but when you have shut the book the perversity is plain. Perversity is, I think, the word. The caprice is gratuitous. When Mr. Meredith tried our powers of faith most severely before, in *Diana of the Crossways*, he was essaying, as in *The Tragic Comedians*, the almost superhuman task of fitting a creature of his imagination to historical fact. I cannot help fancying that Mrs. Norton, albeit a wonderful member of a wonderful family, was a thought less fine than the lady of the book—that when she sold her friend's secret to *The Times*, nature was doing a less elaborate trick than Mr. Meredith in the case of Diana. But there the attempt, though almost foolhardy, was successful. Mr. Meredith had set himself a most difficult but a possible task. He was a rider exulting in his skill, and he forced his horse up a flight of stone steps. In this *House on the Beach* he has attempted to fly, and in my opinion has had a tumble. The heroine of the story, then, is incredible to me as a whole ; but that point set apart, the workings of her mind are instructive to the student of her creator, because, while characteristic for certain, they are not very subtle, and are expressed with notable simplicity.

I cannot agree with some critics that Tinman is a glaring failure. The effects of the whole story are those of farce rather than comedy, and the most farcically funny of these, the rescue of Tinman from his falling house in his Court suit, is only possible because of the grotesque vanity and smallness of his character. For all that, I do not think Mr. Meredith can create people like Tinman and his sister, with such fulness and enjoyment to himself, as he can create people whose folly is finer and whose manners are more agreeable. He overdoes silliness of a vulgar type. I have lately, I confess by the way, reflected with much gratification on the fact, that of his greatest creations, the most—the exception readiest to mind is the immortal nurse in *Richard Feverel*—are people of breeding and even of affluent habits. Nobody admires more than I, certain writers among us who take for themes "humble"—the satire of that word is growing crude—"humble" and uneducated people. But I notice a growing tyranny which ordains that people who speak in dialect, people who live in slums, and the more aggressive and anachronistic order of Bohemians, and none but these, are fit subjects for books. I read a story the other day which began, somewhat in the manner of Mr. G. P. R. James, with two men leaving a club—a sufficiently democratic institution nowadays, one would have thought—and I happened to see a criticism thereon which objected, not that the story was bad, but that the author was a snob for having anything to do—any "truck," should one say?—with "clubmen." Surely there is more to be said for the blatant snobbery of an earlier time, than for this proletarian exclusiveness. The accident of Mr. Meredith's choice of material is a consolation.

III

The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper is a brilliant and delicious farce spoiled, and the uselessness of criticising it may be mitigated by suggesting the question: Why did Mr. Meredith spoil it? It is one I cannot answer. You are presented to a General, stupid, respectable, complacent. He has been a conqueror of women in his time; he is enormously pleased with himself. A keenly humorous and delightfully malicious woman has reason to punish him. The punishment she devises is a series of caricatures, the mere description of which is irresistibly comic, and the wretched General is driven by outraged vanity, to show them appealingly to his friends. The farce is furious as it proceeds, and you wonder what fitting climax to the ludicrousness is to end it. And lo! the climax, a simple intensifying of the torture, is passed, and you are faced by a terrible anti-climax, which is the marriage of the torturer to the tortured; nothing less, in fact, than a command to your common sympathies and canting kindliness of heart, which the farce had artistically excluded, to rush in pell-mell. It is a slap in the face to a worthy audience, and I cannot understand why it was done. Mr. Meredith is far above all suspicion of truckling to the average reviewer, who insists that everybody be happy and good. Can it have been—for the apparent revulsion in the lady's psychology, though not incredible, is carried with the high hand of mere assertion—that Mr. Meredith was sorry to have been cruel? Certainly he was cruel: pain was inflicted on the ass of a General. Most satire and most farce involve pain, actual or imaginary, to some victim—if you think of it. But you should not think of it, and if you are a unit of a worthy audience, you do not think of it. If it be the art of the inventor, to exclude so far as possible, a tendency to think of it, by his presentation of the victim, Mr. Meredith is here completely successful. The General is credible and human, but he is absurd, and the absurdity is duly emphasised to the point of your forgetting his humanity. And Mr. Meredith, as an artist here of farce, has prevented any feeling of rancour in you towards the General, rancour which would have made your appreciation of his punishment, a satisfaction of morality, and not a pure enjoyment of farce. There is a pair of lovers to whom the General's folly brings temporary disaster, but they are made—and surely the restraint was wonderfully artistic—so merely abstract, that you care nothing for their sorrow. *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper* is, in fine, as artistic and as abundantly laughable a farce as was ever made, until you reach the end, which to me is inexplicable. But how many farces are there in English, for the stage or for the study, where you laugh with all your intelligence alert? I think they may be counted easily.

IV

It is to be noticed that both these stories are simple in diction. The charge of obscurity, that is brought by nine of ten reviewers against Mr. Meredith's books, is one that may be supported with facility. Indubitably he is, as Mr. Henley has said, "the victim of a monstrous cleverness that is neither to hold nor to bind." Over and over again, he is difficult when he might have been easy. He compresses impossibly, like Tacitus, or presents a commonplace in crack-jaw oddities of expression, like Browning. But more often still, the obscurity is in the reader's intelligence, not in the writer's art. We are accustomed to novelists of little individuality, or no individuality at all: Mr. Meredith's intellect is as individual as that of any poet in the English language. Necessarily, therefore, he is hard to understand. We are accustomed to presentations of the clothes of men and women, and of the baldest summary of their thoughts and feelings: Mr. Meredith has penetrated further into character, and has exposed minuter subtleties of thought and feeling than any writer of English poetry or prose. Necessarily, therefore, he is hard to understand.

I think this opinion is very well supported by these two stories. In them he is not concerned with any fine studies of feeling or thought, and he is quite simple. There are a few pomposities, a few idle gallantries of expression; but in the main he is here to be understood without a second thought.

V

Mr. Meredith's prose does not satisfy my ideal. The two qualities of prose that I value above all others are ease and rhythm. He can be easy, but in his case ease has the appearance of a lapse. He can be rhythmical, but he is rhythmical at long intervals. That quality of rhythm which seems to have come so commonly to our ancestors before the eighteenth century, seems hardly to be sought by the prose writers among ourselves. Were it sought and found, I am assured it would be hardly noticed.

Mr. Meredith is often neither musical nor easy. But as a manipulator of words to express complexity of thought he has no peer. It was by this complexity, this subtlety, and penetration of his, that he was valuable to me when first I read him. I imagine there must be many in my case, to whom he was, above all things, an educator. It was his very obscurity, another name, so often, for a higher intelligence, that was the stimulating force in him for such as myself. Youth can rarely appreciate an achievement of art as such. But youth is keen to grind its intellect on the stone of the uncomprehended. That was the service of Mr. Meredith to those in my case. We puzzled and strove, and were rewarded by the discovery of some complexity of thought, or some subtlety of emotion unimagined aforetime. Fortunately for us, advance of years and multiplying editions had not yet earned him the homage of the average reviewer ; for youth is conceited, and does not care to accept the verdict of the mass of its contemporaries. Mr. Meredith was sometimes an affectation in us, and sometimes the most powerful educator we had. In the passage of years, as we grew from conceit of intelligence into appreciation, in our degrees, of things artistic, we perceived that he was also a great artist, and sympathy was merged in admiration. The *Egoist* is perhaps the most stimulating, intellectually, of Mr. Meredith's books, the fullest interpreter, perhaps, of the world in which we live. In my declining years, so to speak, I value it less than *The Tale of Chloe*. For in a world that is become, in a superficial way, most deplorably intelligible, achievements of art are rare.

VI

When I first read *The Tale of Chloe* it was in an American edition, and I thank my gods I had not read any summary of its plot in a review. But from the third chapter I felt that tragedy was in the air, for I seemed to have the impression of an inevitable fate drawing nearer, until I reached the end, where the fate comes and the thing ends sombrely. In other words, I had the impression of a perfect tragedy. I fancy it is the most perfect in form of Mr. Meredith's works of fiction, except *Richard Feverel*. And from its length it is even more impressive of its order, for the air of tragedy is closer. When you had finished *Richard Feverel* you felt the tragedy had been inevitable, but you did not, unless you had a far keener sense than I, feel the tragedy all along. In *The Tale of Chloe* the tragedy is with you all the time. The elect and wise humours of Beau Beamish, the winsomeness of the dairymaid duchess, the artificial sunshine of the Wells, are perceived only as you glance away from the shadow, where stand Camwell, Chloe, and Count Caseldy. One may divide them in this way, because Duchess Sŭsan, though a wholly realised creation in herself, stands, as it were, in the plot for an abstract contrast to Chloe ; another beautiful child of English nature would have served as well.

That the tragedy is inevitable you feel altogether. And yet, when you think it out, you perceive that it is the wonderful art of the telling, which makes it so. That is more the case than even in *Richard Feverel;* suicide is, in itself, less credible and likely, than a catastrophe following on a very natural duel. It is the art of the telling, that brings the truth home to you.

And the force of the tragedy is more wonderful for another reason. Mr. Meredith has created for it a very artificial atmosphere, or has reproduced a society which was, on the surface, as artificial as can be imagined. Beau Beamish, the social king of the Wells, compelled the rude English to conduct themselves by ordinances of form. He ruled them with a rod of iron ; he must have inspired an enormous deal of hypocrisy. With a company of bowing impostors for background, and with some of them for actors, is played a drama of intense strength. The strongest emotions of our nature are presented in terms of bric-à-brac. Everybody is "strange and well-bred." Chloe, tying the secret knots in her skein of silk to mark the progress of an intrigue which must end, as she has willed, in her death, is gay the while, and talks with the most natural wit. She discusses the intrigue with Camwell in polite enigmas. Camwell, who sees the intrigue and foresees the unhappiness, though not until the end, the death of his mistress, carries himself as a polished gentleman. Caseldy is none of your dark conspirators. The guile of the duchess is simple hot blood.

This delicacy of the setting assists the exquisite pathos of the central figure, surely one of the noblest in tragic story. The strength of will, so admirable and so piteous, which enables her to impose blindness on herself for the enjoyment of a month, and finally to die that she may save her weaker sister and the man she loves, is relieved by curiously painful touches of femininity. When

Camwell is telling her of the purposed elopement, she knows well that Caseldy, the traitor to herself, is the man, yet she says, "I cannot think Colonel Poltermore so dishonourable." By many such touches is the darkness of the tragedy made visible.

Chloe's words to Camwell in this last interview, are for the grandeur of their simple resignation, in the finest spirit of tragedy. "Remember the scene, and that here we parted, and that Chloe wished you the happiness it was not of her power to bestow, because she was of another world, with her history written out to the last red streak before ever you knew her."

θάρσει · σὺ μὲν ζῇς, ἡ δ'ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πάλαι
τέθνηκεν.

Antigone went not more steadily to her grave.

I fear I have been something egotistical in this attempt of mine, and would permit myself some apology of quotation to conclude. Mr. Meredith has found room in *The Tale of Chloe* for some of the happiest expressions of his philosophy, and some of his most perfect images in description. Of the ballad, which relates the marriage of the duke and the dairymaid, he says: "That mischief may have been done by it to a nobility-loving people, even to the love of our nobility among the people, must be granted: and for the particular reason that the hero of the ballad behaved so handsomely." I cannot think what the guardians of optimism have been about, that they have not cried out on the "cynicism" of this remark. Here is a vivid summary of observation—Beau Beamish "was nevertheless well supported by a sex, that compensates for dislike of its friend before a certain age, by a cordial recognition of him when it has touched the period." There are many such pregnant generalisations, and never do they intrude on the narrative.

"She smiled for answer. That smile was not the common smile;

it was one of an eager exultingness, producing as he gazed the twitch of an inquisitive reflection of it on his lips. . . . That is the very heart's language; the years are in a look, as mount and vale of the dark land spring up in lightning." I question if that can be matched for beauty and force of imagery in Mr. Meredith's works.

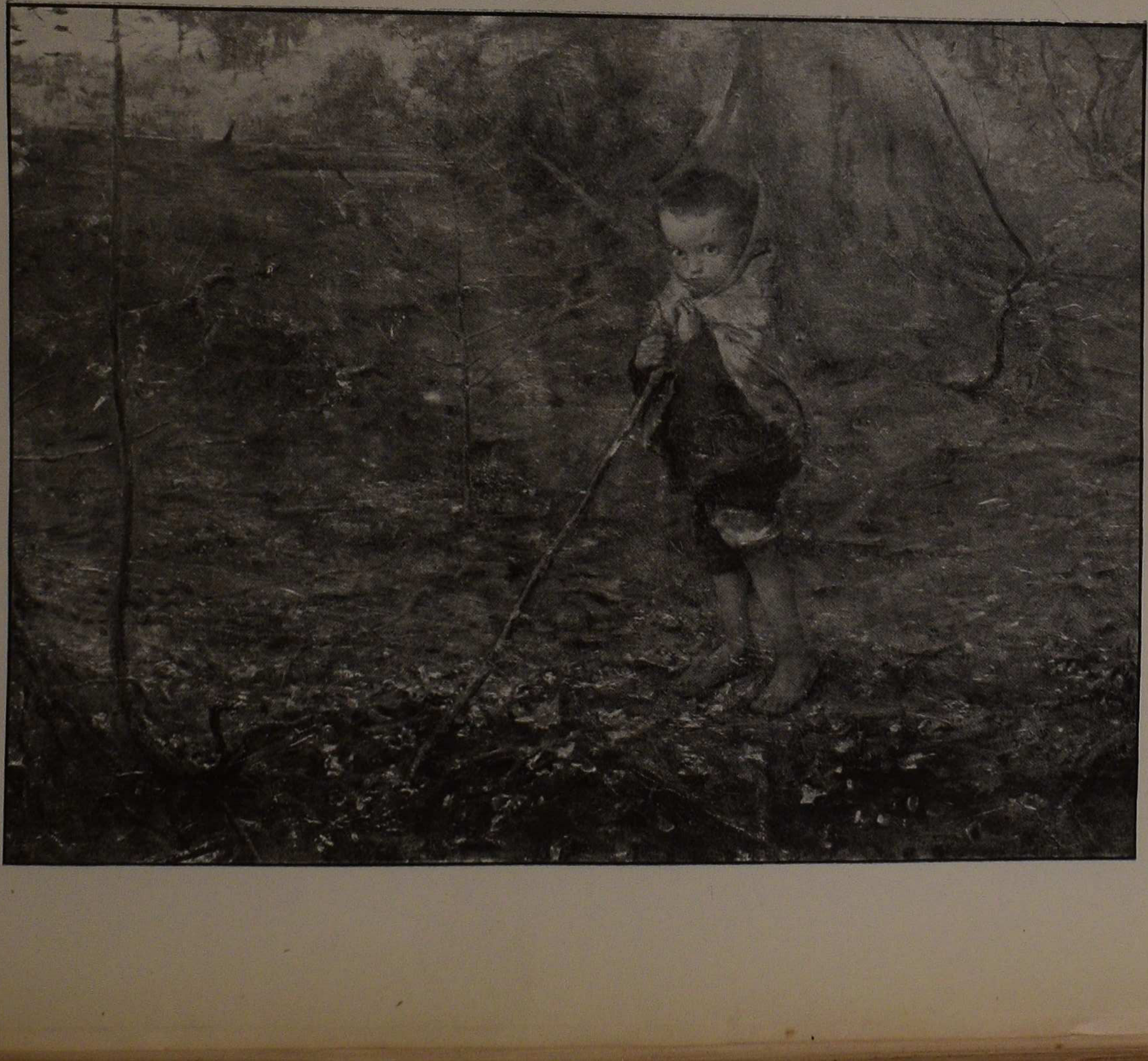
And this of Chloe's musings: "Far away in a lighted hall of the west, her family raised hands of reproach. They were minute objects, dimly discerned as diminished figures cut in steel. Feeling could not be very warm for them, they were so small, and a sea that had drowned her ran between. . . ."

"Mr. Beamish indulges in verses above the grave of Chloe. They are of a character to cool emotion."

As I said in beginning, my eulogy in prose must be impotent for such disservice.

The Prodigal Son

By A. S. Hartrick



Shepherds' Song

By Nora Hopper

"All alas and welladay"
(Shepherds say!)
Stepping with a stealthy pace
Past the place
Where the idle lilies blow!
"Here Diana dreaming lay
(Snow in snow!)
Lay a-dreaming on a day
Long ago."

Few the prayers the shepherds say
(Welladay!)
Now Diana ends her chase,
Giving place
To a maid with softer eyes,
Colder breast
(Mystery of mysteries!)
For her greatest gift, and best,
Giving rest.

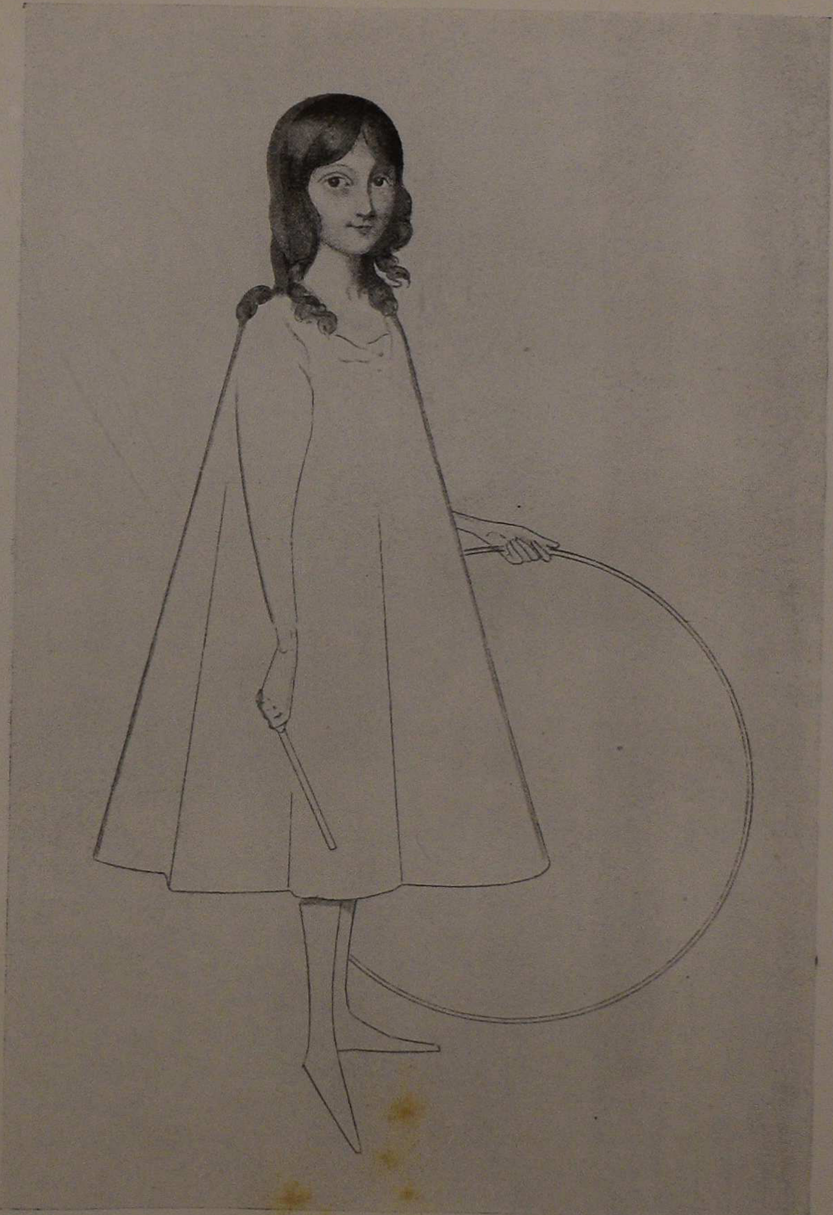
"Now we thole," the shepherds say,
"Shorter night and longer day.
Shorter days
Sweeter were: when in the nights
Came a sudden press of lights:
Came the shining of a face
Far away.
And we gave Diana praise
For the passing of her face."

"All alas and welladay,"
Shepherds say—
"Maiden rule we still obey—
Yet we loved the first maid best:
Terror-pressed
Though we fled by herne and hollow
Fearing angry shafts to follow,
Dead, we knew that we should rest
On her breast."

"All alas and welladay,"
Shepherds say,
"Earth was green that now is grey:
Auster dared not any day
Beat or blow
When 'mid lilies Dian lay
(Snow in snow!)
Lay a-dreaming on a day
Long ago."

Portrait of a Girl

By Robert Halls



The Phantasies of Philarete

By James Ashcroft Noble

I

FOR quite a month or two it was noticed at the Shandy Club that a certain change had passed over Hartmann West. West was rather a notability at the club, though he was, comparatively speaking, a young member. To be precise, he had belonged to it just two years and a half, and six months before his election he had published his first book, *Drafts upon Inexperience.* It was a volume of somewhat exotic sentiment and paradoxical reflection, with a dash of what was just then beginning to be called "the new humour"; and the novelty, as represented by West, found no great favour with the critics. In most quarters the book was either energetically slated or altogether ignored—which, as we all know, is a much worse fate—but somehow, perhaps as a consequence of the very vigour of the slating, perhaps in virtue of that touch of unconventional genius which critics are not always quick to detect, the *Drafts* were honoured by the great reading public, and in half a year Hartmann West was a hero of six editions, and a member of the somewhat exclusive Shandy Club.

On the whole, he was a fairly popular member, in spite of the fact that he had what is called an uncertain temper ; but, during the period to which reference has been made, his popularity had much declined, for the uncertainty had become a very unpleasant certainty ; and an after-dinner chat or game of whist with Hartmann West was becoming, even to the most gentle and tactful members of the club, a thing that was to be avoided, if avoidance were at all possible. Most of those who had in a tepid way liked him, began to regard him with a dislike which was not in the least tepid ; but one or two Shandians—illuminated it may be by personal experience—had been heard to say that it was no use being hard upon poor West ; for as Major Forth, the well-known African explorer, pithily put it : "It's plain enough that the man has had a nasty knock-down blow of some kind or other ; but he'll get over it all right if fellows will only give him a chance." The Major's intuition was wonderfully accurate. Hartmann West *had* received a knock-down blow ; and though chances were not dealt out to him in overflowing measure, he did get over it. At least, he seemed to get over it ; but I can't forget the way in which Sumner told that he could have pulled him through the influenza, complicated as it was, if he hadn't had something on his mind. "He was sick of life, sir, and when a man gets to that, it doesn't take much to make life sick of him." It was after his death that I acquired the knowledge which corroborated the Major's theory. And this is the story.

II

A few months after the date of the publication of *Drafts upon Inexperience*, a great stroke of luck had come to a certain John Errington. The influence of the only acquaintance he had in the world who possessed any influence at all, had been exerted in his favour, and he had become a member of the reviewing staff of *Noon*, a mid-day paper, the conductors of which made an emphasised appeal to the public that fancies literature and art, without snubbing that other public which better loves the House of Commons, the Turf, and the Divorce Court. Errington's career up to this time had not been conspicuously successful. All his life he had been more or less of an invalid. In his youth he had tried one or two callings, but ill-health had compelled him to abandon them ; and, having a genuine love of letters and gift of expression, he had—paradoxical as the sequence may seem—drifted into journalism. The leading paper in the northern provincial town where he lived had, in the first instance, published his articles, and had then gone on to pay for them, the pay becoming finally so assured as to justify him—that, at any rate, was the poor fellow's view of the case—in marrying the pretty Alice Blundell, and assuming the responsibilities of a British husband and ratepayer.

They did not exactly live on the fat of the land, but they lived somehow and kept out of debt, and were most foolishly happy until the fatal day when it became known that Mr. Warlow the proprietor of the *Norton Post* had loved American railroad investments not wisely, but too well, and that his journal had passed into new hands. The new hands, as is sometimes the case, did not appreciate the old hands ; and John Errington received an intimation that at the end of the month his services on the great organ of Norton opinion would no longer be required. Seeing that he was a nervous, timid, and singularly unresourceful man, he bore the blow with more of courage than might have been expected from him ; perhaps because it came and did the worst for him at once, the really demoralising troubles being those which arrive in instalments, each one suggesting the harassing question "What next?" Thus it was that he came to take a step which to an ordinary man would have been simple and obvious enough, but which in John Errington indicated the special courage of despair, that is to ordinary courage, what the struggle of delirium is to healthy muscular force. He broke up his little Norton home; bade good-bye to his friends, and to the grave where his two little children lay buried; and carrying in his purse the few bank-notes which were the price of his household goods, took his wife and their one remaining child to London, and pitched the family tent in a dreary but reasonably clean and cheap Camberwell lodging-house.

It was a step to which even despair would not have impelled him had there not been one chance of possible success. About twelve months before the trouble came, he had contributed to the *Post* a short set of articles which had attracted the favourable attention of Sir George Blunt, and a correspondence between the Baronet and himself which had arisen out of them, had been maintained with something of regularity. Out of this correspondence sprung Errington's one hope, for Sir George, who had always written in the friendliest manner, was known to be a large proprietor of *Noon*, and if his good word could only be secured, the terrible *premier pas* in the new life would be successfully taken. Errington accordingly presented himself at the great house in Prince's Gardens, and was received by the master of his fate without any effusion, but with courtesy and kindliness. Sir George was sorry to hear of Mr. Errington's misfortune, and would be pleased to be of service to him. Mr. Errington, as a journalist, would understand that a proprietor felt some delicacy in taking any step, which looked like interference in the literary management of a paper, that was in competent editorial hands;

that the hands of Mr. Mackenzie who edited *Noon* were singularly competent; and that they belonged to a man who was very likely to regard suggestion as an attempt at dictation.

John Errington listened and felt chilly; had he been standing his legs would have trembled.

"But," continued Sir George with a voice in a new key. "I'll tell you what I will do, Mr. Errington. There can be no impropriety in my giving you a letter of introduction to Mr. Mackenzie, in which I will tell him what I know of you, and what I think of your work. Perhaps you had better not present it in person, but send it by post, with a letter of your own, and a few specimen articles—not too many. Then if there is any opening, he will probably make an appointment. I can't promise you that anything will come of it, but there is a chance, and at any rate it is the best thing—indeed the only thing—that I can do."

The two letters and the carefully selected literary specimens reached Mr. Mackenzie at an auspicious moment. The most useful of his general utility men in the literary department of *Noon* had suddenly levanted, and was supposed to be half-way across the Atlantic, having for a companion, the beautiful Mrs. Greatrex, wife of the well-known dramatist. Dick Mawson's morals—or his want of them—had long been notorious; but Mr. Mackenzie did not deal in morals save in his social articles, and very sparingly even there. What concerned him was that Mawson was, as a writer, clever, versatile, and best of all prompt; and his wrath burned as he thought of Dick's perfidious treatment—not of poor Mr. Greatrex, but of *Noon* and of himself, Andrew Mackenzie. And now here was this new man. His articles were hardly so smart as Mawson's, but he seemed to know more, and there was a certain finish about his work which the erring

Dick had never attained. He should be tried. If he proved a success, well and good; if a failure, he could soon be got rid of, and there would be a reasonable pretext—not that Mr. Mackenzie needed any—for saying to Sir George: "Hands off."

And so it happened that after a brief interview with the great man of *Noon*, John Errington left the editorial office in Bouverie Street, for the Camberwell lodgings, bearing under his arm a couple of volumes for review, and in his mind a proposal made by the editor that he should write one of a forthcoming series of articles on "Fin-de-Siècle Fiction." Some ideas for this series, and one quite impossibly libellous contribution to it, were the only keepsakes that the amorous fugitive Dick Mawson had left behind him for the consolation of Mr. Andrew Mackenzie; but the editor made no mention of Dick to John Errington, leaving him indeed with a vague impression that the series was an impromptu scheme, conceived and brought forth in ten minutes for his special benefit.

Mr. Mackenzie did not find Errington a failure, so Sir George Blunt did not receive the "hands off" ultimatum. Indeed the editor rather liked the work of his new contributor, mainly because he found that other people liked it; and the cheques which came monthly to the little house at Shepherd's Bush (for Camberwell had been abandoned) sometimes represented an amount which made Errington feel that fortune had really come to him at last. There was, however, a harassing irregularity in the descent of the golden or paper shower. Sometimes publishers abstained from publishing the right sort of books; sometimes, even in *Noon*, politics raided the territory of letters; and there were months when Errington would have made a fair profit by exchanging his cheque for a ten pound-note. He had tried to get work on other newspapers, or to find an appreciative magazine editor to accept his more thoughtful and elaborate literary essays; but the newspapers had no vacancy, and the magazine editors all wanted short stories—the one literary commodity which he found himself unable to supply. In spite, therefore, of what he admitted to be his wonderful good luck, there were seasons when Errington felt somewhat anxious and depressed.

He was feeling so one day, when he entered Mr. Mackenzie's room, seeking what he might devour. For two months the cheques had been of the smallest; and before very long there would be a new and expensive arrival in the house at Shepherd's Bush—a conjunction which roused the timid man to unwonted persistence of appeal.

"I'm afraid there's nothing," said Mackenzie; "the publishers are keeping everything back until this dynamite excitement is over, and upon my word I am glad they are, for it fills the paper. This is really the only thing I have in hand that is in your line, and it has been here for nearly a month." As he spoke the editor took down a daintily attired book from a shelf behind him, and continued: "I didn't intend to notice it. I think West is a conceited ass who needs snubbing; but as you want something you can take it, and of course treat it on its merits. But you must keep within a column, and if you only send half, so much the better."

John Errington left Mr. Mackenzie's room with a lighter heart than that which he had taken there, for though the *honorarium* represented by a column of copy was not much in itself, it was just then a good deal to him. He was specially grateful to his chief for stretching a point in his favour, for he was inclined to agree with his opinion that *The Phantasies of Philarete* was likely to prove poor stuff. During the weeks in which it had been lying on Mr. Mackenzie's shelf, Errington had read reviews of it in the *Hour*, the *Morning Gazette*, the *Parthenon*, and the *Book World*, and these influential journals with almost unique unanimity had pronounced it a strained, affected, pretentious, and entirely vapid performance. "If a beginner," said the *Hour*, "were to ask us to indicate the qualities of substance and workmanship which he, in his own attempts ought most studiously to avoid, we should give him this volume and say, 'My dear boy, you will find them all here.'"

III

When John Errington, after going upstairs to kiss his rather worn-looking little wife, who was taking the afternoon rest which had become a necessity, lighted his pipe and began to read the *Phantasies*, he found the opening pages better than he expected. He saw nothing of strain or affectation; and if the substance was slight, the style had a graceful lightsomeness which seemed to Errington very charming. He read on and on; his wife came into the room with her sewing and he never noticed her entrance; but when he had finished the chapter which contains the episode of old Antoine's daughter, he looked up and said, "I must read this book to you, dear love, it is just wonderful."

Errington did not go to bed until he had reached that last chapter, which, you will remember, Mr. Walter Hendon cited a few weeks ago as the most beautiful thing in contemporary prose. The next morning he wrote and posted his review, the 1200 words of which would, he knew, just fill a column of *Noon*, and in two days more it appeared. In the meantime, Errington's enforced leisure had allowed the domestic readings to begin, and, as the fragile wife reclined on her little couch and sewed and listened, her enthusiasm was not less intense than her husband's.

Then, when the paper came, he read his review, and she exclaimed :

"Oh, John, that is lovely : it is one of the best things you have ever done. I do wish you would send it to Mr. West and thank him for the pleasure he has given us. I would like to write myself, only I express myself so stupidly, but you will do it perfectly ; and I am sure he would like to know all that we feel about the book."

"I don't know," said Errington, with the self-distrust always aroused in him by any suggestion of the mildest self-assertion, "I don't suppose he would care for the opinion of a man about whom he knows nothing."

"Oh, yes, he would ; people like sympathy, even if they don't care for praise ; and then, too, if it is really true that he is the sub-editor of *Caviare*, he might be able to get you some work for it."

Now *Caviare*, as proved by its name and motto, "Caviare to the general," was a monthly magazine, dealing exclusively with literature and art in a way that appealed to the superior few ; and some of Errington's best essays—or those which he thought the best—had been declined by several editors on the ground that their goodness was not of the kind to attract their miscellaneous *clientèle*. He had once or twice thought of submitting to *Caviare* one of these rejected addresses ; but he had doubted whether they were up to the mark, and so they had never gone. His wife's last suggestion startled him.

"Oh, I couldn't do that," he said ; "it would spoil the whole thing. It would take the bloom off one's gratitude for a beautiful thing. I couldn't do it. I would rather ask help from a perfect stranger."

"Well, that seems to me to be morbid; and I don't like to hear you talk as if people did you a favour by accepting your work. They accept it not for love of you, but because they know it is good. You remember what Professor Miles said about your essay on 'The Secret of Swift,' and I am sure they would be glad to have it for *Caviare*. I don't often press you to do anything; but I don't think you have ever repented taking my advice, and I *do* want you to write to Mr. West."

Errington was not a strong man. He was too timid to initiate, and too timid to oppose; and his wife was right, for he had never adopted a suggestion of hers without finding that she was wiser than he. And so he sat down and wrote:

Titan Villas, Shepherd's Bush.

DEAR SIR,

I am a stranger to you, and my only introduction is the enclosed review of *The Phantasies of Philarete* which I have had the great privilege of contributing to *Noon*, and which appears in to-day's issue of that journal. I have tried my best to do justice to the truth and beauty and tenderness of the book; but I feel that my best does not say what I wanted to say. Nor is a second attempt likely to be one whit more successful than the first, so I do not write now to supplement my review; but to express what I could not express in public—my own personal gratitude and that of my wife, to whom I have been reading it, for a book which has touched us as we have not often been touched before. We live a very quiet life into which enters little of what is ordinarily called pleasure, but such a volume as your *Phantasies* brings with it delights upon which we can live for many days. Please accept our hearty gratitude for so great a gift.

I cannot suppose that my name will be at all known to you, for I am, comparatively speaking, a new-comer in the world of London journalism; and I have so far been unsuccessful in obtaining any literary work besides that which has been given me by the editor of *Noon*. To follow an acknowledgment of one favour by a request for another is not usual with me, but I find something in your book which encourages me to unwonted freedom. Just now I have special reasons for wishing to enlarge my slender but ordinarily sufficient resources, and I have thought it possible that you might be willing to look over an article of mine entitled "The Secret of Swift," with a view to giving me your opinion as to its suitability for publication in *Caviare*. The theory propounded in it is, I think, a new one, and Professor Miles has been kind enough to say that it is at any rate sufficiently well-supported to deserve provisional acceptance as a working hypothesis.

But please let this matter await a perfectly free moment. I write not to trouble you about my poor affairs, but to express my gratitude—to which my wife wishes me to add hers—for the pure and rare delight your book has brought to us.—I am, dear sir,

Yours very truly and gratefully,
JOHN ERRINGTON.

Errington was not a man who expected much, yet he felt a certain disappointment when, on the second day after the despatch of his letter, the postman passed and left no reply from Hartmann West. But no postman ever passed the office of *Noon*, and while Errington was wondering whether the author of *Phantasies* could be at home, Mr. Mackenzie was perusing with ireful countenance a letter bearing his signature. It had contained an enclosure in a handwriting with which the editor was familiar, and it ran thus:

Shandy Club, W.

DEAR SIR,

I have received the enclosed communication from a person who is, or professes to be, a member of your staff. You will see that he, truly or falsely, announces himself as the writer of a very fulsome, and yet in some respects gratuitously offensive, review of my latest book which appeared in your issue of Thursday last, and that he then goes on to tout for employment by the editor of a magazine with which I am supposed to be connected. I do not know whether you have any views upon the dignity of journalism ; but you have probably strong views upon the ethics of advertising, and are not very eager to give payment, instead of receiving it, for allowing a small scribe to introduce his wares through your literary columns to possible purchasers. I think it well for you to know to what base use even *Noon* can be put.

Yours faithfully,
HARTMANN WEST.

Seldom had Andrew Mackenzie felt such an access of speechless rage ; and for the moment he could not tell which object of his emotion was the more hateful. He was not a physically violent man, but had either West or Errington presented himself at that moment, violence would certainly have been done. He had not willingly inserted the review of *The Phantasies of Philarete ;* in fact, he had remarked to his nephew and sub-editor that he wished Errington had chosen any other book on which to "tap his d——d private cask of gush ;" but having explicitly given the owner of the cask a free hand, he had not felt it consistent with dignity implicitly to cancel the authorisation. And now this consummate cad, who ought to be off his head with exultation at having been honoured with even the coolest notice of *Noon*, had actually dared to write of its praise as "fulsome" and "gratuitously offensive." What was meant by the latter term Mackenzie did not trouble to guess ; but had he done so, his trouble would have been fruitless, for one vain man can seldom sound the depths of vanity in another. The fact was that Errington had made a veiled reference to previous criticisms of the book as "attempts made by malignity or incompetence to crush a rising author;" and the word "rising" was gall and wormwood to the man who believed himself to have been for at least a year on the apex of fame's pyramid. Had he read Errington's letter first, the unmistakable accent of timorous praise, and still more the appeal to him as a possible patron, would have titillated his vanity and sent him to the review with a clean palate; but of course a printed cutting, headed "A Western Masterpiece," could not wait, and the "rising" vitiated his taste for what would have been to him the dainty dish of adulation.

But Andrew Mackenzie neither knew this nor cared to know it, and his thoughts turned from West to Errington. It has been said that at the moment he knew not which he hated the more; but he did know upon which he could inflict immediate vengeance, and that was a great point. As he brooded upon Errington's offence, West's seemed comparatively trivial, for was it not Errington who had provided West with his offensive weapon? The member of the Shandy Club had said that he did not know whether Mr. Mackenzie had any views upon the dignity of journalism. His ignorance on this matter was very general; but there were many who knew that he held exceedingly strong views concerning the dignity of one journal, *Noon*, and one journalist, Andrew Mackenzie. It was his pride to know that the members of his political staff were to be seen at Government Office receptions, hobnobbing with Cabinet Ministers, that his critics dined with literary peers whose logs they judiciously rolled, and that both were frequently represented in the half-crown reviews. That was as it should be: and here was a fellow who put it in the power of a man like West to say that one of his contributors wrote from Titan Villas, Shepherd's Bush, about his slender resources, and his ardent desire to pick up any crumbs that might fall from the table of *Caviare*. He, at any rate, should be made to suffer.

IV

While Mackenzie was devising his scheme of punishment, John Errington was engaged in pleasant thoughts of Hartmann West. The expected letter might now come by any post, and it would be well to see whether "The Secret of Swift" were in fit condition to be despatched to him, or whether he must get Alice to make a clean copy of it in that pretty handwriting of hers which was always seen at its neatest in her transcript of the MSS. of which she was so proud. The present copy was, however, in capital order, but on examining it he found that one slip was missing. Nervous search through the well-filled drawer soon convinced him that it was not there; but, fortunately, on examining the two edges of the gap, he made the discovery that the lost leaf had been devoted to little more than a long quotation, which could be easily restored by a visit to the library of the British Museum.

He had nothing else to do, and the day was fine. He could start at once, copy his quotation, and have a few hours in the metropolis of the world of books. It was six o'clock when he reached home again, and the dusk of an evening in late autumn was beginning to gather, but the lamp in the little general utility chamber, which served for dining and drawing room, was unlit. As he entered he thought no one was there, but a second glance revealed his wife crouching upon the floor, her head lying upon the couch which stood by the window.

"Dear Alice," he said faintly as he strode forward, "are you ill? what is the matter?" but there was no reply. His first vague terror crystallised into a definite dread, which, however, lasted only for an instant, for the hand he took in his, cold as it was, had not the unmistakable coldness of death; and when he kissed the lips whose whiteness even the dusk revealed, he felt that they were the lips of a living woman.

"Jane, Jane," he called loudly, "bring some water quickly; your mistress has fainted;" and rising from his knees he lit with trembling hands the lamp upon the table. The maid, carrying a basin of water, bustled in with a scared face.

"Oh, dear, dear," she exclaimed, "she do look awful bad; shall I go for the doctor?"

"No, no—we must bring her to, first. How has it happened? Do you know anything about it?"

"No, indeed; she was in the kitchen ten minutes ago, or it might be a quarter of an hour, and the postman knocked at the door, and she says 'That will be the letter the master was expectin',' and then she didn't come back, but I heard nothink, and thought nothink of it. If I'd a heard anythink I'd have come in."

They lifted her on to the couch. Errington loosened her dress and sprinkled the water over her face, while the girl rubbed one of her hands, but there was no movement. The small basin was soon emptied.

"More water, quick," said the man; "and oughtn't we to burn something?"

"Feathers is the thing, but we haven't got no feathers; perhaps brown paper 'd do; I'll fetch some."

It was brought, and the woman now sprinkled the water while the man held under his wife's nostrils the ignited paper which threw off a pungent aromatic smoke. A slight shiver ran through the recumbent figure; the eyelids trembled, then opened, though their glance was hardly recognition, and slowly closed again.

"Alice, dear heart," exclaimed the man brokenly as he gently put his arm round her neck, and drew her lips to his; "speak to me, darling. You will be all right now. I am with you. What has frightened you?"

For a few seconds she lay apparently unconscious; then the eyes opened again with less of that dreadful, unseeing look, and she murmured sleepily, "Where am I? What is the matter, John?"

"Yes, darling, I am here. You are better now. Rest a little bit, and then tell me all about it."

"She's coming to," said the girl, "I'll go and make her a cup of tea. It's the best thing now." And she left the husband and wife together.

While the wife lay, again silent, with now and then a slight movement as of a shiver, a timid voice was heard at the door. "Is mother ill? Can I come in?"

"She's getting better, my pet. Run away now, and be very quiet. You shall come in soon."

The figure stirred again, this time with more of voluntary motion; she made as if to raise herself; her eyes met her husband's with a look of full recognition; she threw her arm round his neck and pressed herself against him in a terrifying outburst of hysterical weeping. It lasted for minutes—how many John never knew—with heavy sobs that convulsed her, and intermittent sounds of eerie laughter. At last the words began to struggle forth with difficulty and intermittence.

"John—John—dear John—my own dear husband—Oh my darling—my darling—I love you, and I have ruined you—it will kill me; but, oh, if I could have died before." And then, with less of violence, for the paroxysm had exhausted her, she began silently to weep again. An hour had passed before John Errington had heard the story, or rather read it in the type-written letters which had dropped from his wife's hands as she fell, and had been pushed under the sofa. He read them first rapidly; then again more slowly, with stunned senses:

Office of *Noon*,
October 5, 1893.

Sir,

Enclosed you will find a copy of a letter which I have just received from Mr. Hartmann West, from which you will see that he has done me the favour to place in my hands a letter addressed to him by you, and written so recently that its purport must be fresh in your memory. That I should see it did not enter into your calculations, and I do not suppose that the man capable of writing it, would in the least understand the emotions excited by it, in the mind of a self-respecting journalist. I may, however, say that never in the whole course of my professional experience—which has been tolerably varied—can I remember an instance in which a trusted contributor to a high-class journal had deliberately puffed a book which he knows to be worthless (for I am assured on all hands that the worthlessness of this particular book would be obvious to the meanest capacity), and has made that puff a fulcrum for the epistolary leverage of two or three contemptible guineas. I congratulate you on the invention of an ingenious system of blackmailing, one great merit of which is that it evades the clutch of the criminal law, though I cannot add to my congratulations either a lament for its present failure or a hope for its future success. Though I am unfortunately powerless to control the operations of the inventor, I am happily able to restrict their scope by refusing the use of *Noon* as a theatre of operation. Please understand

stand that your connection with this journal is at an end. A cheque for the amount due to you will be at once forwarded.

Yours truly,
ANDREW MACKENZIE.

Hartmann West's letter had also been read, and John Errington was vainly endeavouring to check his wife's outpourings of remorse.

"I can't bear it, John. To think that I who love you should have brought this upon you. Oh! I hate myself. You would never have written it if it hadn't been for me. You didn't want to write, and I made you write. But oh, I didn't know. I ought to have known that I was foolish and that you were wiser than I; but I thought of other times when I had done you good and not harm. Dear, dear John; you won't hate me, will you?"

"Don't talk like that, darling; you will break my heart. I should love you more than ever, if that were possible; but it isn't. How could we know that the man who seemed to us an angel was just a devil. When I read the book I felt that he was a man to love, and I tried to put something of what I felt into what I wrote, being sure that he would understand. I wrote from my heart, and he calls it gratuitously offensive. Darling, you mustn't reproach yourself any more; I can't bear it; how could you know, how could I know, how could any one know, that there could be such a man?"

John Errington passed a wakeful night, but his wife slept the heavy sleep of exhaustion. When at eight o'clock he quietly rose, dressed, and went down to breakfast with his little girl, she was sleeping still. "It will do her good," thought Errington, and when Doris had gone to school, he set to work upon his essay, "The Common Factor in Shakespeare's Fools," to pass the time until he heard her bell. It did not ring until half-past eleven, and he ran rapidly up the short flight of stairs.

"Well darling," he said, "you have had a good sleep."

"Oh, I have been awake for a long time—two hours I should think—and I have been in great pain. I didn't ring before, because I thought it would pass away, and I wouldn't trouble you, but it is much worse than it was."

John Errington looked down tenderly upon the thin face, which seemed to have grown thinner during the night. The woman closed her eyes and seemed to be suffering. After a moment's silence she spoke again.

"I'm better now," she said faintly, "but I think dear, Jane had better go for the doctor, and she might knock next door and ask Mrs. Williams if she can come in."

The kindly neighbour was soon by the bedside, and the doctor, who had been found at home, was shortly in attendance. It was not an obscure case, nor a tedious one. Three hours afterwards Alice Errington was the mother of a dead baby-boy, and in the early dawn of the next day Mrs. Williams with many tears placed the little corpse on the breast of the dead mother, and drew the lifeless arm around it. John Errington stood and watched her silently; then he came and kissed the two dead faces; then he threw himself upon the bed, which shook with his tearless sobs.

John Errington, Doris, and Alice's father, Richard Blundell, who came from Norton for the funeral, returned from Kensal Green, and sat down to the untimely meal prepared for Mr. Blundell, who in a few minutes must start to catch his homeward train at Willesden. He was a man of few words, and of the very few he now uttered, most were addressed to his little granddaughter. It was only as the two men stood at the door that he spoke to his son-in-law in that Lancashire accent that the younger man still loved to hear. "Tha's been hard hit lad, and so have I, God knows; but try to keep up heart for th' little lass's sake. We're proud folk i' Lancashire; mayhap too proud; but ye won't mind a bit of a lift in a tight place fro' Alice's faither. Ah wish it were ten times as much. God bless thee—and thee, my lass."

The old man kissed the child, wiped his eyes, and was driven away. John watched the cab till it turned a corner; then looked hard at the ten pound note left in his hand as if it presented some remarkable problem for solution; closed the door; led Doris into the little sitting-room; and began the task imposed upon him—of keeping up his heart.

V

The cheque from *Noon* had come; John Errington had it in his pocket, where also were five sovereigns and a few shillings. The ten-pound note was still in his hand, and a rapid calculation told him that when the undertaker was paid, nearly a month of safety from absolute penury was still his. In a month surely something could be done, and John Errington set himself to do it. The man to whom self-assertion and self-advertisement had been impossible horrors, now found himself wondering at himself as he bearded editors and sub-editors, and referred—in perhaps too apologetic a tone for persuasion—to the *Noon* articles on "Fin-de-Siècle Fiction," which had really excited more comment than he was aware of in journalistic circles. His success was small. No editor had any immediate opening, but one or two were friendly, and said they would bear his name in mind. A proprietor who was his own editor told him that literary paragraphs containing quite fresh information would be always acceptable; but of the various paragraphs he sent in, only two—representing a sum of fourteen shillings or thereabouts—found acceptance. The going up and down other men's stairs became as hateful to him as it was to Dante; but he lashed himself into hope for the "little lass's" sake, and hope made it endurable. At six o'clock every evening he arrived at Titan Villas, and for two hours, until Doris's bedtime, in helping the child with her lessons, or reading aloud while she nestled up to him, he felt something that was to happiness as moonshine is to sunlight. One evening, however, he had to forego this delight, for he had received a message from a certain editor, who had asked him to call after eight at his house at Wimbledon. He had seen the great man, who had given him a long chapter of autobiography, but had said little of practical importance, and when, just before midnight, he reached home, he was weary and dispirited. He drew his arm-chair to the fire, warmed his feet, smoked his pipe in the company of an evening paper for half an hour, and then went to bed, turning for a moment—as was his wont—into the room where the ten-years-old little Doris must have been asleep for hours. He held the carrying-lamp over the child's face, which was somewhat flushed: and the bed-clothes were tumbled as if the sleeper had been restless. As he made them straight and tucked them in, the child stirred but did not waken, and Errington was on the point of leaving the room, when his eye caught the little frock hanging at the foot of the bed. The new black cashmere looked shabby and draggled, and as he instinctively grasped one of its falling folds, he felt it cold and wet. Then he turned to the little heap of under-linen upon a chair and was conscious of their chill damp. "She has been wet through," he thought, "and her clothes have never been changed. Poor motherless darling." He gathered the little garments together on his arm, and, taking them downstairs, found a clothes-horse, and spread them upon it before the fire, which he had replenished when he came in.

He knew how it had happened. A kindly girl who had once been a near neighbour had offered to give the little Doris lessons in music, but she had recently removed to lodgings nearly two miles away, and the child must have been caught in the heavy rain which he remembered had set in just about the time that she would be leaving Miss Rumbold. The thoughtless Jane had allowed her to sit in the saturated garments until she went to bed.

In the morning the child's eyes looked somewhat dull and heavy, but otherwise she was apparently quite well, and she resisted her father's suggestion that she should stay in bed instead of going to school. In the evening when Errington returned from his wanderings she seemed much better. Her eyes were bright again—brighter even than usual—and for the first time since her mother's death she chatted to her father with something of her old animation. During the night Errington heard a short, hard cough often repeated, but when he left his bed and went to look at her she was fast asleep. When he rose for the day and visited her again she seemed feverish; the cough was more frequent; and her breathing was somewhat short.

"What is the matter with her?" said the father to the doctor whom he had hastily summoned. "I suppose it is nothing really serious."

"Well," said the slowly-speaking young Scotsman, "I'm just thinking it's a case of pneumonia, and pneumonia is never exactly a trifle, but I see no grounds for special anxiety. You must just keep her warm, and I'll send her some medicine over, and look in again to-night."

He sent the medicine and looked in, but said little.

"Of course the temperature is higher, but that was to be expected. I will be down again in the morning, and she just needs care—care."

The care was not lacking, for Errington was himself Doris's nurse, but, as Mr. Grant observed, "pneumonia is never a trifle," and even her father did not know how heavily her mother's death had taxed the child's power of resistance. The unequal fight lasted for five days and nights, and for the last two of them there could be little doubt of the issue. The end came on Sunday evening as the bells were ringing for church. The child had been delirious during the latter part of the day, and had evidently supposed herself to be talking to her mother, subsiding from the delirium into heavy sleep ; but about six she awakened with the light of fever no longer in her eyes, and stretched out a thin little hand to Errington, and said faintly, "Dear, dear father."

"Are you feeling better, darling ?" he said.

"I don't know," she whispered ; "I like you holding my hand. I feel as if I were sinking through the bed. I think I am sleepy."

She closed her eyes, and for ten minutes she lay quite still. Then she opened them very wide and looked straight before her, lifted her free hand, and partly raised herself from the pillow. The glance which had been a question became a recognition. "Oh mother, mother," she exclaimed in the clear voice of health, "it is you ; oh, I am so glad." And then the grey veil fell over the child's face ; she sank back upon the pillow ; and the eyes closed again for the last time. In the room where there had been two—or was it three ?—there was only one.

VI

On the morning of the funeral there came a letter for John Errington. It was from the editor who lived at Wimbledon, and was very brief.

"Mr. Joliffe regrets that on consideration he cannot entertain Mr. Errington's proposal with regard to the series of articles for *The Book World.* When Mr. Joliffe informs Mr. Errington that he has had an interview with Mr. Mackenzie, he will doubtless understand the reasons for this decision."

Mr. Williams, John Errington's neighbour, was standing near him in the darkened room. He had offered to accompany him to Kensal Green, for Richard Blundell was confined to bed and could not come, and the stricken man was alone in his grief. When Errington had read the letter he quietly returned it to its envelope, and placed it in his pocket, as the undertaker summoned them to the waiting coach. On their return from the cemetery Williams pressed Errington to come into his house and sit down with his wife and himself at their midday dinner.

"It is very kind of you," said Errington, "but I must not be tempted; I have work to do. But I will come in for a moment and thank Mrs. Williams for all her goodness to me and mine."

He went in, and the thanks were tendered.

"Well, I must go, now," he said abruptly, after a short silence. "God bless you both. Good-bye!"

"Oh, Mr. Errington, not 'good-bye.' You must come in this evening and smoke a pipe with Robert. 'Good morning' is what you ought to say, if you really can't stay now."

"I don't know. This is a world in which 'good-bye' never seems wrong. But God bless you, anyhow. That must be right—if," he added suddenly, "there is any God to bless."

Then he walked hastily down the road in the direction of half a dozen shops which supplied suburban requirements, of suburban quality, at suburban prices; went into one of them, and in a few moments reappeared and turned homeward. Entering the house, he drew up the blind of the sitting-room and sat down at the table to write a letter. When it was finished he read it over, pu it in an envelope, addressed it, took it to the pillar-box about twenty yards from his gate, and when he had dropped it in, sauntered with a weary air back to the house. This time he went, not to the sitting-room, but to the kitchen.

"Jane," he said, "I'm tired out. I don't think I have slept properly for a week, but I feel very sleepy now. I shall go and lie down on the bed, and don't let me be disturbed, whatever happens. If I get a chance I think I can sleep for hours."

He turned as if to go, and then turned back again, thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew from it a few coins. Two of them were sovereigns. These he laid upon the table.

"Your wages are due to-morrow, Jane, aren't they? I may as well pay you now lest I forget. Twenty-three and fourpence, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir; but don't trouble about it a day like this; it'll do any time."

"I would rather pay it now. I haven't the even money, but you can get me the change when you go out."

"Thank you, sir; but won't you have a chop before you lie down? I can have it ready in ten minutes."

"No, I'm not hungry; I want rest." Then after a pause—"I'm afraid I spoke roughly that day—about those wet clothes, you know. We may all forget things. I forget many things, and I daresay I was too hard."

The girl burst into tears. "Oh, sir," she said, "it's kind of you, but I can't forgive myself. The sweet pet that was so fond of her Jane, and that I wouldn't have harmed for"—but as she took the apron from her eyes she saw that she had no listener. Her master had gone upstairs.

It was half-past twelve, for the funeral had been very early.

At eight in the evening Jane was standing at the door of the next house, speaking eagerly in a terrified tone to Mrs. Williams's small servant. "Oh, will you ask Mr. Williams if he would mind stepping in. I'm frightened about the master. He's been in his room since noon, and I can't make him hear. I'm afraid something's happened."

"What's that?" said Williams, stepping out into the narrow passage.

The girl repeated her story, and without putting on his hat he followed her into the house and up the stairs.

"It's the front room," she said, and Williams knocked and called loudly, but all was silent.

"How many times did you knock?"

"Ever so many, and very hard at last."

"Good God! I'm afraid you're right," and as he spoke he tried the handle of the door.

"He has locked himself in. We must break the door open. Have you a mallet? Anything would do."

"There's a screwdriver; nothing else but a little tack hammer, that would be of no use."

The large screwdriver was brought, and the wood-work of the suburban builder soon gave way before its leverage. When Mr. Williams entered, carrying the lamp he had taken from Jane's trembling hand, he saw that Errington had undressed himself and got into bed. He was lying with his face towards the door, and one arm was extended on the coverlet. He might have been sleeping, but before Williams touched the cold hand he knew what had happened. There was a bedroom tumbler on the dressing table, and beside it an empty bottle bearing the label, "Chloral Hydrate. Dose one tablespoon, 15 grains." John Errington was dead.

VII

When during the forenoon of the next day Hartmann West entered the Shandy Club the correspondence awaiting him—which was usually heavy—consisted only of a single letter. He glanced at the address, which was in a handwriting that he could not at the moment identify, though he thought he had seen it before. He mounted to the smoking-room on the first floor, holding it in his hand, and when he had established himself in his favourite arm-chair near one of the three windows, drew a small paper knife from his waistcoat pocket and cut open the envelope. The letter began abruptly without any one of the usual forms of address :

I do not want you to throw this letter aside until you have read it to the end, and therefore I mention a fact concerning it which will give it a certain interest—even to you. It is written by a man who, when you receive it, will be dead—dead by your hand—who has just come from the grave of his dead wife and dead children, murdered by you as surely as if you had drawn the knife across their throats. I wonder if you remember me, or if you have added to all the other gifts with which Heaven, or Hell, has dowered you, the gift of forgetfulness. I am the man who read your book and loved it—loved it for itself, but loved still more the heart that I thought I felt was beating behind it, and wrote of my love which I was glad to tell—first for all who might read what I had written, and then for you alone. I must have written clumsily, for I seem to have angered you—how I know not, and because I had angered you, you took your revenge. I was a poor man—I told you I was poor—but I was rich in a wife and child who loved me, and whom I loved ; and I only thought of my poverty when I looked at them, and felt the hardness of the lot to which my physical weakness, and perhaps other weakness as well, had led them. Then, because my wife was looking forward to the pains and perils of motherhood, and I had tried in vain to secure for her something of comfort in her time of trial, I humbled myself for her—you know how ; and yet, fool that I was, I felt no humiliation, for I thought that I was writing to, as well as from, a human heart. Then came the blow which your letter rendered inevitable, the blow which bereft me of the scanty work which had perhaps been done clumsily, but which I know had been done honestly, the blow which killed a mother and an unborn child. I found her fainting with your letter lying beside her, and in two days she was dead. She left me with our little girl for a sole remaining possession ; but a child motherless is a child defenceless, and to-day I have laid her in her grave, and she is motherless no more. Only I am alone, and now I go to join them, if indeed the grave be not the end of all. I know not, for you have robbed me of faith as well as of joy. Within the last hour, I have with my lips and in my heart, denied the God whom I have loved and trusted, even as I loved and trusted the man who has murdered my dear ones. If there be no God I will not curse you, for what would curses avail ? If there be a God I will not curse you, for my cause is His cause, and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? But remember that when you are where I am now—the unknown now in which you read these words—I shall summon you with a summons you dare not disobey, to stand as a murderer before His judgment bar.

John Errington.

Hartmann West had lighted a cigar before he cut the envelope. It had gone out. No connoisseur relights a cigar, and Hartmann West was a connoisseur not only in tobacco but in many other things. He considered himself—quite justly—a proficient in the art of making life enjoyable, and his achievements in that art had so far been successful. He had enjoyed the writing of his letter to Andrew Mackenzie ; it was, as he put it to himself, "rather neat." But it came back to him with an unexpected rebound ; and Major Forth was not wrong when he talked about a knock-down blow.

For such it undoubtedly was. West was not, like Mackenzie, a thick-skinned and insensitive man. He was, on the contrary, a bundle of nerves, and the nerves were well on the surface—an idiosyncrasy of physique which accounted for the delicacy and exquisiteness of sympathetic realisation that had charmed Errington in *The Phantasies of Philarete.* But he was a colossal egoist, and when his egoistic instincts were aroused, the man who became almost sick when he heard or read a story of cruelty, showed himself capable of a sustained and startling ruthlessness of malignity. When the mood passed he became again his ordinary self—the fastidious, sensitive creature, susceptible to tortures which a chance word of any coarser-fibred acquaintance might inflict. Errington's letter appealed to the quick imagination which was his hell as well as his heaven. It made pictures for him, and he turned from one only to find himself face to face with another. He saw the fainting woman, the dead child, the corpse of the man—bloody it might be, for the tormenting fiend of fancy provided all possible accessories of horror—and as he looked the tide of life ebbed within him.

Next morning this one ghastliness of terror was removed, but its place was taken by a new dread. He received a copy of a suburban news-sheet, the *West London Comet*, with a thick line of blue pencilling surrounding a report headed "Sad Suicide of a Journalist." The details he knew and those that he did not know were all there ; and there, too, was the evidence of a man Williams—by whom he rightly conjectured this latest torture was inflicted—who had told the jury that Errington's misfortunes had been due to some unpleasantness connected with a review of a book by Mr. Hartmann West, and would evidently have told more had not the coroner decided that the matter was irrelevant. The *West London Comet* was not taken at the Shandy Club; but would not the report, with this horrible mention of his name, find its way into more highly favoured journals? With trembling hands, which even brandy had not served to steady, he turned over the papers of that morning, and the evening journals of the day before, and, as he failed to find the dreaded item, relief slowly came. But the older terror remained; the pictures were still with him; and though one had lost its streak of sanguine colour, they were still lurid enough. Gradually the very fact upon which, for an hour, he had congratulated himself—the fact that the world knew nothing, but that he and one unknown man shared the hateful knowledge between them—became in itself all but unbearable. Once, twice, half a dozen times, he felt that he must tell the story; but when he thought he had nerved himself for the attempt, the words refused to come.

Three months later, in the morning and evening papers, which had taken no notice of the affair at Shepherd's Bush, there were leaderettes lamenting, with grave eloquence, the loss sustained by English literature in the death of Mr. Hartmann West. A comment upon these utterances found a place in "At the Meridian," the column in *Noon* known to be written by its accomplished editor, Mr. Andrew Mackenzie:

> "Were there no such emotion as disgust I should feel nothing but amusement in the perusal of the eulogies upon the late Mr. Hartmann West which have appeared in the *Hour* and the *Morning Gazette*. Less than six months ago the former journal, in reviewing Mr. West's *Phantasies of Philarete*, declared the book to be 'characterised by pretentiousness, strain, and affectation,' and the latter authority, with

its well-known subtlety of satire, remarked that, 'Mr. Hartmann West's extraordinary vogue among the shop-girls of Bermondsey, and the junior clerks of Peckham, will probably be maintained by a volume which is even richer than its predecessors in shoddy sentiment and machine-made epigram.' The *Hour* has now discovered that Mr. West's work presented 'a remarkable combination of imaginative veracity and distinction of utterance,' and the *Gazette* mourns him as 'a writer whose death breaks a splendid promise, but whose life has left a splendid performance.' The style of these belated eulogists is their own ; but their substance seems to have been borrowed from this journal, which in reviewing the 'pretentious shoddy' and 'machine-made' work, spoke of it as 'one of those books which make life better worth living by revealing its possibilities of beauty, which touch us by their truth not less than by their tenderness, in which the lovely art is all but lost in the lovely nature which the art reveals, which make us free of the companionship of a spirit finely touched to fine issues.' I am not apt at sudden post-mortem eloquence, and I have nothing to add to these words, written while Hartmann West was still alive, and able to appreciate the sympathy he was so ready to give."

"Well, I never could have believed," said a young member of the Shandy Club, "that Mackenzie wrote that review of poor West's *Phantasies*."

The current issue of *Noon* had just come in, and, though it was before luncheon, Major Forth, who had contracted bad habits in Africa and elsewhere, was refreshing himself with whisky and potash. He looked at the speaker, slowly emptied his tumbler, and replied, "I don't believe it now."

Pro Patria

By B. Paul Neuman

LAND of the white cliff and the circling ocean,
Land of the strong, the valiant and the free,
Well may thy proud sons with their hearts' devotion
Seek to repay the debt they owe to thee.

Thou givest them health, the muscle and the vigour,
The steady poise of body and of mind,
The heart that chills not 'neath an Arctic rigour,
Nor droops before the scorching desert wind.

Thou givest them fame, a thousand memories leaping
Into the light whene'er thy name is spoken,
Thy heroes from their graven marbles keeping
Their faithful watch o'er thee and thine unbroken.

Thou givest them rugged honesty unbending,
The heart of honour and the lip of truth,
Quick-answering impulse, freely, gladly spending
The strength of manhood with the zeal of youth.

A noble heritage ! and I might claim it,
  Whose life within thy very heart awoke,
But yet the prayer, whenever I would frame it,
  Died on my lips before the words outbroke ;

Though kin of mine are lying where the grasses
  Bow to the west wind by the Avon's side,
And daily o'er their graves the shadow passes
  Of that fair church where Shakespeare's bones abide.

For far away beyond the waste of waters
  There lies another, a forsaken land,
A land that mourns her exiled sons and daughters
  Whose graves are strewn on every alien strand ;

A land of splendour, but of desolation,
  Of glory, but a glory passed away,
Her hill-sides peopled with a buried nation,
  Her fruitful plains the lawless wanderer's prey.

Yet dearer even than the hills and valleys
  That wear the mantle of our English green,
By whose glad ways the mountain brooklet sallies,
  Are those far heights that I have never seen ;

White Hermon glistening in the morning glory,
  Dark Sinai with its single cypress tree,
Green Tabor, and that rugged promontory
  Whence Carmel frowns upon the laughing sea.

This is the land of hope without fruition,
Of prophecies no welcome years fulfil,
While bound upon their dreary pilgrim mission
The heirs of promise lack their birthright still.

Yet not the whole, for hope remains undying,
And such the hopes that gather round thy name,
Dear land, it were indeed a new denying,
To set before thee, riches, power, or fame.

A little longer, and the habitations
Of exile shall re-echo to thy call,
"Return, my children, from among the nations,
Forget the years of banishment and thrall."

Then shall the footsteps of the sons of Kedar
Cease from the silent wastes of Gilead,
No ruthless hand shall raze the oak and cedar
Wherewith its swelling uplands once were clad.

No longer shall the thief and the marauder
The peaceful tillers of the soil molest,
But from rough Argob on the eastern border
To sea-washed Jaffa, all the land shall rest.

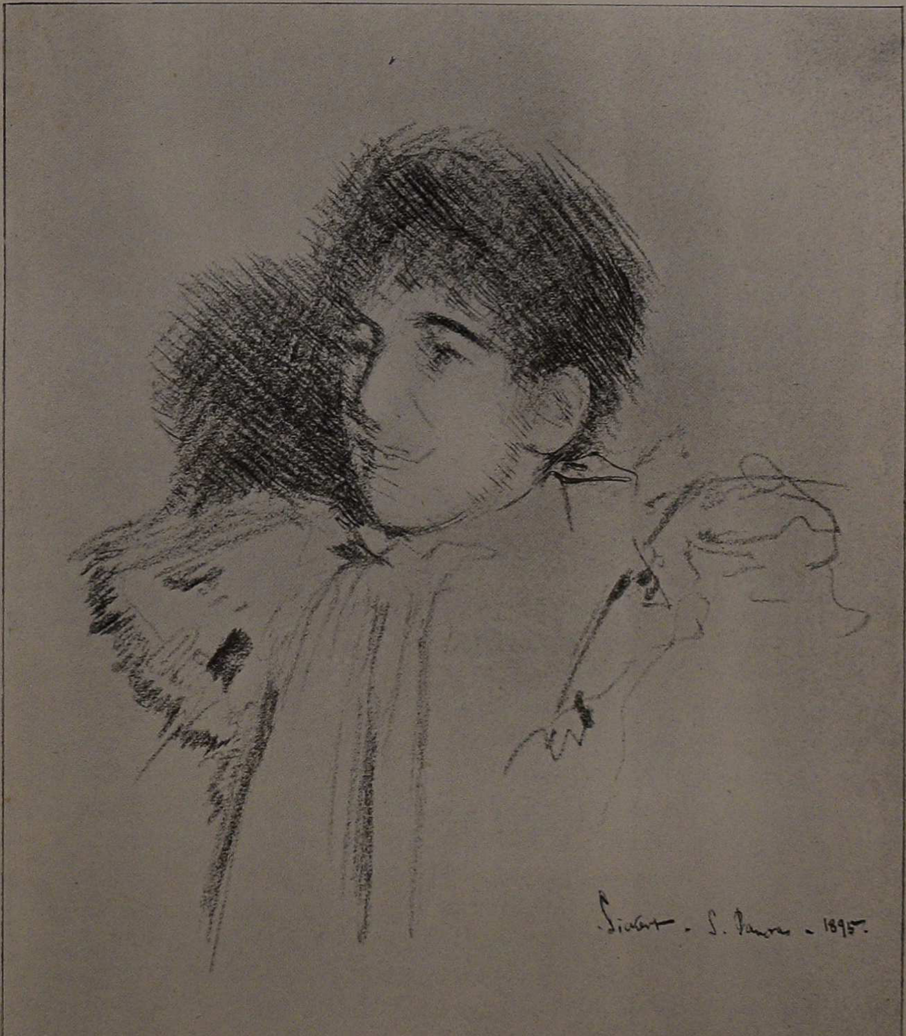
Land of the prophets, in the prophet's vision
Thy future glory far transcends thy woes,
And soon, in spite of hatred and derision,
Thy wilderness shall blossom as the rose.

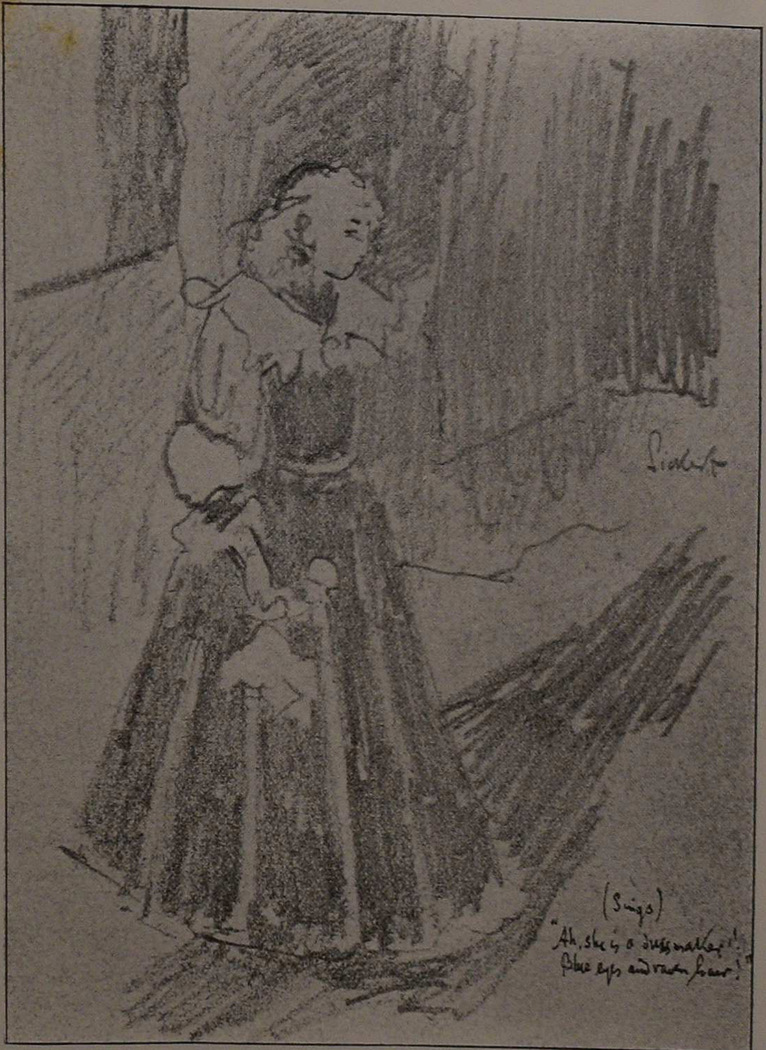
Two Sketches

By Walter Sickert

I. Portrait of Mrs. Ernest Leverson

II. The Middlesex Music Hall


Sickert - S. Pancras - 1895.



(Sings)
"Ah, she is a dressmaker!
Blue eyes and raven hair!"

Puppies and Otherwise

By Evelyn Sharp

THE philologist threw down his pen with an exclamation.

"It is really annoying, most annoying," he said querulously, "I can't endure children. They are worse than dogs. You can kick a dog. But it is impossible to kick a child. What is a man to do, Parker? Why did that dolt of a Tom recognise her? He might at least have waited till the morning. And how am I to send over the hills at this time of night to tell her father? I am the most unfortunate of men."

"Twenty mile if it be a step, and a proper rough night," murmured his housekeeper, who never allowed the details of a catastrophe to be neglected.

The philologist cast a distracted look over his papers and swore softly.

"Can't you suggest something, Parker?" he demanded irritably. "Am I to be put to all this inconvenience just because Tom finds a bit of a girl thrown from her pony and is misguided enough to bring her home? Who did he say she was, confound his memory?"

"Miss Agnes, sir, only child of the Rector of Astley, sir, and the very happle of his eye, so Tom says, he does. And sleeping like a lamb in the best bedroom now, sir."

The philologist savagely kicked a footstool that was not in his way, and took a turn round the room. "What's the use of standing there and gossiping?" he shouted suddenly; "did I ask who the brat was? Do I want to know whether her fool of a father dotes upon her? Tell Tom to saddle the roan at once and ride across with my compliments to the Reverend What's-his-name, and say that his daughter is here, and be hanged to him.

"Do you hear? And don't let me be disturbed again to-night. Supper? Who said supper? Did I say supper, Parker? Then go and don't make purposeless remarks."

His housekeeper vanished precipitately, and the philologist returned to his great work on the Aryan roots. He was a man to whom fame had come late in life, when he had wholly ignored his youth in a passionate toil after it. At the age of twenty he had resolved to be a successful man, and at the age of forty-six he found himself one, albeit a piece of soulless mechanism with the wine of life left untasted behind him and its richest possibilities lying buried in his past.

He sighed self-pityingly, and pulled his manuscript towards him once more. And just as he did so, the door opened from without and the child came in.

He did not know, as any other man could have told him, that she was already almost a woman, even a beautiful woman with awakening eyes and most seductive hair; but he did recognise with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction that she was not what he usually meant by a child, and that he could not class her with kittens and colts and all other irresponsible animals whom he was accustomed to regard with prejudice. And this discovery gave him a sharper sense of injury than before, and he sat staring stupidly while she walked swiftly across the room to him, holding up her riding skirt with one hand and brushing back her tumbled curls with the other.

"They didn't wake me in time as they promised," she said, "and I want to get back to Daddy. People are such idiots. Did she take me for a baby, that woman? Why does every one think that children have got to be lied to? And how soon can I have my pony, please?"

A violent gust of wind rushed round the house at that moment and rattled viciously at the bolts of the shutters as though mocking her words. But the girl paid no heed to it, and merely tapped her toe impatiently on the ground, and waited expectantly for an answer to her question. The philologist stood up and put on his spectacles and looked down at her.

"I—I am at a loss," he said slowly, "are you the—the person whom Tom picked up and brought home in the gig?"

"Yes, yes, I suppose so! At least, I think he said he was Tom. But what does that matter now? Oh, do order my pony before we talk any more, won't you? Daddy wants me, don't you see."

"Daddy wants you," said the philologist absently, for he was following the train of his own thoughts rather than the meaning of her words; "I don't quite understand you."

"You don't look as though you did," said Agnes candidly; "perhaps I scared you, did I? You see, I thought if I came across that woman again she would tell me some more lies. And I smelt smoke so I guessed that meant a man in here. Men generally stick to the truth, don't you know; at least, you can always tell if they don't. But I say, why don't you ring for my pony?"

"How old are you?" said the philologist, rousing himself with an effort.

"What's that got to do with it?" cried the girl angrily. "Don't you know that all this time Daddy is——"

"Daddy be——" began the philologist, and checked himself with a smile; "my dear little girl, nobody is going to hurt you here, and I shall certainly not allow you to go out in this storm. I really think," he continued tentatively, "I really think you had almost better go to bed. It's bedtime now, isn't it?"

"Bedtime?" cried Agnes, opening her eyes, "why it's not nine o'clock. Besides, I told you I was going home. What's the matter with the weather?"

"The weather is—well, inclement," said the man of learning feebly, "and Tom has already gone to set your father's mind at rest. It seems to me——"

"Then why didn't you say so before? It was rather stupid of you, wasn't it?" rejoined Agnes cheerfully. "Well, I'm very glad I haven't got to ride any more to-day, my arm's horribly stiff. Gobbo's all right, that's one blessing."

She was sitting in the arm-chair now, with her feet on the fender, and the philologist, who was accustomed to be the autocrat of his household, somehow felt ousted from his own sanctum. He glanced sideways at the ruddy head that was bent towards the blaze, and he felt a curious sensation of discomfort.

"Gobbo? Ah, yes, my man said something about the pony being unhurt," was all he said, though she paid not the slightest attention to his words, for they might just as well have been left unsaid.

"That's not a bad little stable you've got," she went on in her fresh voice, "and the puppies are just ripping, ever so much jollier than the Persian kittens. You shouldn't have crossed your Persian with a tabby, it's such a pity. Why did you?"

The philologist became suddenly conscious of being wonderfully ignorant by the side of this child with the red hair and the large open eyes, and the discovery did not add to his composure.

"I didn't know I had," he said, and sat down where he could see her face.

"Didn't you really? And the puppies are such beauties too, five of them. You almost don't deserve to have puppies, do you?"

"I'm afraid I am hardly worthy of them," owned the philologist meekly. "But do you really like them yourself?"

"Why, I couldn't help it of course. They're such jolly little warm snoozling things. Don't you know the *feel* of a puppy? What! you don't? Only wait, that 's all."

She was gone before he could protest, and five minutes later she was teaching him how to keep two puppies warm inside his coat, while he wondered grimly what it was that the Aryan languages had not succeeded in teaching him.

"What else do you like besides puppies?" he asked; "dolls?"

"Dolls!" she said contemptuously. "As if any one who could get animals would ever want dead things. I've always hated dolls."

"I," said the philologist slowly, "have lived with dead things for twenty years."

"Oh well," said the child, "that was really quite unnecessary. There are always lots of puppies about everywhere. So it was clearly your own fault, wasn't it?"

"Perhaps it was," said the philologist.

"Any one can see," she went on in her frank manner, "that you're not really fond of puppies, or else you would be able to hold them without strangling them. I think I'd better take them, hadn't I?"

While she was gone the philologist lay back in his chair and pondered. And he was looking critically at himself in the mirror when she opened the door and came in again.

"Sit down child, and get warm," he said brusquely; "you shouldn't have gone to that cold stable this time of night."

"Why not? I always do things like that. There's no one to stop me, you see. Besides I expect no one knows except Rob."

"Who's Rob?" was his inevitable question.

"Oh, don't you know? Rob is Daddy's pupil of course. Daddy teaches him lots of things, like Latin and physiology. Rob is awfully clever, and he can breed better terriers than Upton at the lodge. I'm awfully fond of Rob."

The philologist made a mental synopsis of Rob's character which depicted him as anything but a pleasant young fellow.

"I suppose you're clever too, aren't you?" he heard her saying.

"No," he replied irritably, "I don't know anything. Go on telling me about yourself, child."

"But," persisted Agnes, "why do you have such a lot of papers if you are not clever?"

"That's just what I don't know," he said, "they have not taught me how to hold a puppy without strangling it, have they?"

"No," said the child, still looking straight at him with wide open eyes, "but you could soon learn that. It's awfully easy, really. There's something about a puppy that won't let you hurt it, however stupid you are. I could soon teach you all there is to learn about puppies. It's the other things I can't learn."

"Never mind about the other things, they are not worth learning, my child," said the philologist, as he boldly passed his fingers through her thick hair. She moved a little restively, and then looked up at him quickly with a comical expression of concern on her face.

"I say," she began, and paused.

"What's the matter now?" he asked.

"Well, you know, I'm—I'm hungry," she said, and then laughed as he called himself a brute and sprang to his feet. "No, don't ring," she added imploringly, "I can't stand any more of that woman to-night. Don't you think you could go and forage?"

Their friendship was in no way weakened by their impromptu meal over the fire; and when they had finished, and the writing table with its sheets of valuable manuscript was strewn with crumbs, the philologist ventured to renew the conversation on a more natural basis than before.

"Hands cold?" he said, and touched one of them.

"A little," she said, and put them both into his.

"It's very good of you to come and cheer a lonely old man like this," he went on, half expecting her to contradict his words.

"Oh, but I couldn't help coming, could I?" she cried laughing. "And the first thing I did was to want to go back again!"

"And I wouldn't let you, would I?" he pursued, glancing, still nervously, at the large grey eyes that met his so unflinchingly.

"All the same, I don't believe you are a bit lonely," said the child, looking away into the fire, "you have got your book about the Aryan things, haven't you?"

"Of course I have got my book about the Aryan things, but that isn't everything," exclaimed the philologist with an indefinite feeling of irritation; "for instance, it does not help me to amuse you when you pay me a visit. And to-morrow, when you get home to your father and Rob, you won't want to come back again to an old man who can only talk about Aryan roots. Do you think you will, child?"

The last words were added insinuatingly, and the philologist held his breath when he had said them, but Agnes only laughed again and kicked away a lighted coal that had fallen into the fender.

"Why not?" she said carelessly, "I don't suppose you'd be any worse than Daddy when he is writing a new sermon. Only of course that isn't often."

The philologist was seized with one of his fits of unreasonable anger.

"Really, you are a singularly dense child," he exclaimed, dropping her hands roughly and thrusting his own into his pockets; "I always knew that children were tiresome little beasts, but I did think they had some perspicacity as well."

Agnes stared and asked if she had done anything.

"Done anything?" shouted the philologist, jumping out of his chair and scowling down at her, "it 's time you learned I am not here to be laughed at just because I am an intellectual old fool! Don't you know why I am here, eh? I am here to benefit mankind by the knowledge I have been accumulating for twenty years and more; and you may stare at me as much as you like with those confounded great eyes of yours, but I'll drive something into your bit of a head before I've done with you. Oh yes, I will. And if you don't ride that pony of yours over here once a week and do as I tell you when you get here, I'll be——"

He did not mention his ultimate destination, for he caught sight of her face in time, and he thought she looked frightened. So he sat down again abruptly, and growled out an apology.

"I say, do you often do that?" she asked, hiding her face from him with her hand. "Because it's most awfully funny."

The astonished philologist had no time to reply before she broke into a great peal of maddening laughter, such mirthful, mocking laughter that he was almost stunned by it, and yet was possessed at the same time of a desperate impulse to flee from her.

When she looked up again he was lighting a candle with his back turned to her.

"Allow me to tell you it is bedtime," he said shortly.

She got up and came across the room, and stood just behind him.

"I say, you—you are not wild with me, are you?" she asked wistfully.

"I think you are an exceedingly ill-mannered child," he replied without turning round.

She sighed penitently.

"I'm so sorry, because, you know, I do really think it was nice of you to offer to teach me. And if you still mean it, I will really come over every week and try to learn something. And—and—do you know, I think I'm rather glad Gobbo did put his foot into that rabbit-hole to-day."

The philologist moved slowly round and scanned her upturned anxious face. The extreme innocence of her expression, and the utter absence of mischief in the recesses of her deep eyes, succeeded in dispelling his anger. But he had a dim idea that the situation demanded something more definite from him, and the brilliant thought came to him, that of course she was only a child after all, and had therefore to be treated like a child, and he believed that children always expected to be kissed when they said they were sorry. So he hastily put both his hands behind him, and stooped very stiffly, and placed a kiss on her cheek, and then backed into the table and pushed her towards the door.

"There, there, bedtime now, and we won't say any more about it," he muttered awkwardly.

But to his discomfiture, she whirled round and faced him with her eyes blazing and her lips parted.

"How dare you?" she gasped. "I—it—it is a great shame, and I shall tell Rob. That's the second time I've been treated like a baby to-day. You're a horrid, musty old man!"

The door slammed, and her exit was succeeded by a profound silence. Then the bewildered man returned slowly to the fire-place, and looked at the chair in which she had just been sitting.

"Yes," he said out loud with an effort, "I suppose there is still my book about the Aryan things."

* * * * *

One sunny day in the late spring, they were sitting together in the garden. It was their last lesson, but they were making no pretence of learning anything. The philologist was feeling conscious of something he wanted to say to her before she went, and he did not know how to say it, and he did not attempt to begin. And Agnes, as usual, was doing most of the talking, though when she asked him the natural questions that belonged to her age and her womanhood, he ran the risk of her youthful contempt and shook his head silently in reply, for he knew he had ignored the same questions years ago, and it was too late now to go back and search for the answers to them. And the dew came at their feet and made them shiver, and the sun went down behind the hedge and sent fluttering rays of light across their faces, and the chestnut-tree dropped fluttering showers of pink blossoms on their bare heads, until at last Agnes cried out that she must be going, and they walked across the lawn with their arms locked.

When he lifted her on her pony he would have given all the languages he knew to be able to speak the one language he was too old to learn.

"Agnes," he said, "have you enjoyed your lessons?"

She darted him a mischievous look.

"Well, there hasn't been much Sanskrit about them, has there?" she said demurely.

"I suppose you mean," said the philologist a little sulkily, "that I can't even teach you what I do know."

"No, I didn't mean that," she said composedly; "I meant that I was too stupid, or too old, or something, to learn."

"Old? What are you talking about, you absurd child?" he cried angrily. "You will never know what it is to be old, *you*. It is the deepest hell in God's earth. Don't be ridiculous!"

"Then I don't know how it was, and it doesn't matter much, does it? Anyhow we have had great fun, and that is the principal thing. Good-bye," she said.

He only ventured to kiss her riding glove passionately, as he guided her pony out of the gate, though the knowledge he had once thrown away, would have told him that he might have done more, and yet not offended her.

"How queer he is," thought the child at the bottom of the lane, as she stopped to arrange her stirrup. "I don't think I ever knew any one quite so musty. I shall ask Rob——"

A shout from behind made her look round, and there was the philologist running after her as fast as he could, with his odd shambling gait and his loosely swinging arms.

"It is only, that is——" he gasped wildly, "I—I have the intention of driving down to see your father to-morrow."

"Is *that* all? How awfully funny you are sometimes," cried Agnes with a shout of laughter, as she gave her pony a cut with the whip. And they both vanished round the corner, and left the philologist standing where he was, staring silently after them.

"I don't think he has often been laughed at before," she told Rob that evening, as they gave Gobbo his feed in the dimly lighted stable at home.

Rob's arm was round her waist, and Rob's face was close to hers as she said this; and he kissed her three times very gently at the end of her confession, and whispered in her ear:

"Poor chap! He's got something to learn. And it isn't Sanskrit, is it, dear?"

But the philologist never learned it. And he never drove over to see her father as he had intended. He went for a long walk instead, and his path led him by chance through a wood some miles off, where he found Gobbo grazing by himself among the bracken, and whence he returned in hot haste, and without his hat, and very dishevelled.

He found Tom waiting to speak to him when he at last reached home and burst into his study.

"What the dev——?" he began furiously, and then stopped for sheer want of breath, for he had run all the way back without stopping.

"If you please, sir," began Tom stolidly, "what be I to do with them two puppies you was a-keeping of for Miss Agnes? They be nigh upon ten weeks——"

"Do with them?" shouted the exasperated philologist. "Drown them, of course, you fool! Drown them, and never mention such farmyard details to me again. Do you take *me* for a young animal with insolent eyes and a dandy moustache and a soft voice? Eh? Do you, sir? Then clear out of my sight at once and go to the deuce with your puppies. Don't you know I have got my book to write on the Aryan——?"

But the philologist's words ended in a great sob, and he dropped heavily into a chair, while Tom slouched awkwardly out of the room.

For Tom, too, understood.

" Here Lies Oliver Goldsmith "

By W. A. Mackenzie

With Youth's unconquerable eye
I watch the flux of Life go by,
Where foam the floods of Strand and Fleet ;
And like the hum of mighty looms,
Upon my country ear there booms
The diapason of the street.

Accustomed long to cheep and twit
Of robin, sparrow, wren, and tit,
And call of throstles in the may,
'Tis all so strange I turn aside,
Sick of the hoarse and hungry tide,
To try the Temple's quieter way.

In a grey alley, still and lone,
I stumble o'er a lichened stone,
Whereon four simple words are writ :
Our Noll sleeps gloriously below—
A joyous sleep, with dreams like snow,
The muffled street-sounds soothing it.

I know The Traveller bade them lay
Anigh the street his weary clay,
Because he saw in all things good,
And heard above the thundering street
The brave young Lark that singeth sweet
Of helping hands and brotherhood.

He knew what it is good to know,
When down the Dale o' Dreams we go—
That living brothers still are near;
And some struck sore in battle-test
Come to our side, a moment rest,
Then back to buffet with a cheer.

Ah, Noll, thou singest yet, though dead,
A song that calms our coward dread
Of Life and Life's benumbing din.
With larger faith I turn me back
To where the stream runs strong and black,
And, greatly hoping, plunge me in.

Suggestion

By Mrs. Ernest Leverson

If Lady Winthrop had not spoken of me as "that intolerable, effeminate boy," she might have had some chance of marrying my father. She was a middle-aged widow; prosaic, fond of domineering, and an alarmingly excellent housekeeper; the serious work of her life was paying visits; in her lighter moments she collected autographs. She was highly suitable and altogether insupportable; and this unfortunate remark about me was, as people say, the last straw. Some encouragement from father Lady Winthrop must, I think, have received; for she took to calling at odd hours, asking my sister Marjorie sudden abrupt questions, and being generally impossible. A tradition existed that her advice was of use to our father in his household, and when, last year, he married his daughter's school-friend, a beautiful girl of twenty, it surprised every one except Marjorie and myself.

The whole thing was done, in fact, by suggestion. I shall never forget that summer evening when father first realised, with regard to Laura Egerton, the possible. He was giving a little dinner of eighteen people. *Through a mistake of Marjorie's* (my idea) Lady Winthrop did not receive her invitation till the very last minute. Of course she accepted—we knew she would—but unknowing that it was a dinner party, she came without putting on evening-dress.

Nothing could be more trying to the average woman than such a *contretemps ;* and Lady Winthrop was not one to rise, sublimely, and laughing, above the situation. I can see her now, in a plaid blouse and a vile temper, displaying herself, mentally and physically, to the utmost disadvantage, while Marjorie apologised the whole evening, in pale blue crèpe-de-chine ; and Laura, in yellow, with mauve orchids, sat—an adorable contrast—on my father's other side, with a slightly conscious air that was perfectly fascinating. It is quite extraordinary what trifles have their little effect in these matters. *I* had sent Laura the orchids, anonymously ; I could not help it if she chose to think they were from my father. Also, I had hinted of his secret affection for her, and lent her Verlaine. I said I had found it in his study, turned down at her favourite page. Laura has, like myself, the artistic temperament ; she is cultured, rather romantic, and in search of the *au-delà.* My father has at times—never to me—rather charming manners ; also he is still handsome, with that look of having suffered that comes from enjoying oneself too much. That evening his really sham melancholy and apparently hollow gaiety were delightful for a son to witness, and appealed evidently to her heart. Yes, strange as it may seem, while the world said that pretty Miss Egerton married old Carington for his money, she was really in love, or thought herself in love, with our father. Poor girl ! She little knew what an irritating, ill-tempered, absent-minded person he is in private life ; and at times I have pangs of remorse.

A fortnight after the wedding, father forgot he was married, and began again treating Laura with a sort of *distrait* gallantry as Marjorie's friend, or else ignoring her altogether. When, from time to time, he remembers she is his wife, he scolds her about the houskeeping in a fitful, perfunctory way, for he does not know that Marjorie does it still. Laura bears the rebukes like an angel ;

indeed, rather than take the slightest practical trouble she would prefer to listen to the strongest language in my father's vocabulary.

But she is sensitive; and when father, speedily resuming his bachelor manners, recommenced his visits to an old friend who lives in one of the little houses opposite the Oratory, she seemed quite vexed. Father is horribly careless, and Laura found a letter. They had a rather serious explanation, and for a little time after, Laura seemed depressed. She soon tried to rouse herself, and is at times cheerful enough with Marjorie and myself, but I fear she has had a disillusion. They never quarrel now, and I think we all three dislike father about equally, though Laura never owns it, and is gracefully attentive to him in a gentle, filial sort of way.

We are fond of going to parties—not father—and Laura is a very nice chaperone for Marjorie. They are both perfectly devoted to me. "Cecil knows everything," they are always saying, and they do nothing—not even choosing a hat—without asking my advice.

Since I left Eton I am supposed to be reading with a tutor, but as a matter of fact I have plenty of leisure; and am very glad to be of use to the girls, of whom I'm, by the way, quite proud. They are rather a sweet contrast; Marjorie has the sort of fresh rosy prettiness you see in the park and on the river. She is tall, and slim as a punt-pole, and if she were not very careful how she dresses, she would look like a drawing by Pilotelle in the *Lady's Pictorial.* She is practical and lively, she rides and drives and dances; skates, and goes to some mysterious haunt called *The Stores*, and is, in her own way, quite a modern English type.

Laura has that exotic beauty so much admired by Philistines; dreamy dark eyes, and a wonderful white complexion. She loves music and poetry and pictures and admiration in a lofty sort of way; she has a morbid fondness for mental gymnastics, and a dislike to physical exertion, and never takes any exercise except waving her hair. Sometimes she looks bored, and I have heard her sigh.

"Cissy," Marjorie said, coming one day into my study, "I want to speak to you about Laura."

"Do you have pangs of conscience too?" I asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Dear, we took a great responsibility. Poor girl! Oh, couldn't we make Papa more——"

"Impossible," I said; "no one has any influence with him. He cant't bear even me, though if he had a shade of decency he would dash away an unbidden tear every time I look at him with my mother's blue eyes."

My poor mother was a great beauty, and I am supposed to be her living image.

"Laura has no object in life," said Marjorie. "I have, all girls have, I suppose. By the way, Cissy, I am quite sure Charlie Winthrop is serious."

"How sweet of him! I am so glad. I got father off my hands last season."

"Must I really marry him, Cissy? He bores me."

"What has that to do with it? Certainly you must. You are not a beauty, and I doubt your ever having a better chance."

Marjorie rose and looked at herself in the long pier-glass that stands opposite my writing-table. I could not resist the temptation to go and stand beside her.

"I am just the style that is admired now," said Marjorie, dispassionately.

"So am I," I said reflectively. "But *you* will soon be out of date."

Every one says I am strangely like my mother. Her face was of that pure and perfect oval one so seldom sees, with delicate features, rosebud mouth, and soft flaxen hair. A blondness without insipidity, for the dark-blue eyes are fringed with dark lashes, and from their languorous depths looks out a soft mockery. I have a curious ideal devotion to my mother; she died when I was quite young—only two months old—and I often spend hours thinking of her, as I gaze at myself in the mirror.

"Do come down from the clouds," said Marjorie impatiently, for I had sunk into a reverie. "I came to ask you to think of something to amuse Laura—to interest her."

"We ought to make it up to her in some way. Haven't you tried anything?"

"Only palmistry; and Mrs. Wilkinson prophesied her all that she detests, and depressed her dreadfully."

"What do you think she really needs most?" I asked.

Our eyes met.

"Really, Cissy, you're too disgraceful," said Marjorie. There was a pause.

"And so I'm to accept Charlie?"

"What man do you like better?" I asked.

"I don't know what you mean," said Marjorie, colouring.

"*I* thought Adrian Grant would have been more sympathetic to Laura than to you. I have just had a note from him, asking me to tea at his studio to-day." I threw it to her. "He says I'm to bring you both. Would that amuse Laura?"

"Oh," cried Marjorie, enchanted, "of course we'll go. I wonder what he thinks of me," she added wistfully.

"He didn't say. He is going to send Laura his verses, 'Heartsease and Heliotrope.'"

*

She sighed. Then she said, "Father was complaining again to-day of your laziness."

"I, lazy! Why, I've been swinging the censer in Laura's boudoir because she wants to encourage the religious temperament, and I've designed your dress for the Clives' fancy ball."

"Where's the design?"

"In my head. You're not to wear white; Miss Clive must wear white."

"I wonder you don't marry her," said Marjorie, "you admire her so much."

"I never marry. Besides, I know she's pretty, but that furtive Slade-school manner of hers gets on my nerves. You don't know how dreadfully I suffer from my nerves."

She lingered a little, asking me what I advised her to choose for a birthday present for herself—an American organ, a black poodle, or an *édition de luxe* of Browning. I advised the last, as being least noisy. Then I told her I felt sure that in spite of her admiration for Adrian, she was far too good-natured to interfere with Laura's prospects. She said I was incorrigible, and left the room with a smile of resignation.

And I returned to my reading. On my last birthday—I was seventeen—my father—who has his gleams of dry humour—gave me *Robinson Crusoe!* I prefer Pierre Loti, and intend to have an onyx-paved bath-room, with soft apricot-coloured light shimmering through the blue-lined green curtains in my chambers, as soon as I get Margery married, and Laura more—settled down.

I met Adrian Grant first at a luncheon party at the Clives'. I seemed to amuse him; he came to see me, and became at once obviously enamoured of my step-mother. He is rather an impressionable impressionist, and a delightful creature, tall and graceful and beautiful, and altogether most interesting. Every one admits he's fascinating ; he is very popular and very much disliked. He is by way of being a painter ; he has a little money of his own —enough for his telegrams, but not enough for his buttonholes— and nothing could be more incongruous than the idea of his marrying. I have never seen Marjorie so much attracted. But she is a good loyal girl, and will accept Charlie Winthrop, who is a dear person, good-natured and ridiculously rich—just the sort of man for a brother-in-law. It will annoy my old enemy Lady Winthrop—he is her nephew, and she wants him to marry that little Miss Clive. Dorothy Clive has her failings, but she could not—to do her justice—be happy with Charlie Winthrop.

Adrian's gorgeous studio gives one the complex impression of being at once the calm retreat of a mediæval saint and the luxurious abode of a modern Pagan. One feels that everything could be done there, everything from praying to flirting—everything except painting. The tea-party amused me, I was pretending to listen to a brown person who was talking absurd worn-out literary clichés— as that the New Humour is not funny, or that Bourget understood women, when I overheard this fragment of conversation.

"But don't you like Society ?" Adrian was saying.

"I get rather tired of it. People are so much alike. They all say the same things," said Laura.

"Of course they all say the same things to *you*," murmured Adrian, as he affected to point out a rather curious old silver crucifix.

"That," said Laura, "is one of the things they say."

* * * * *

About three weeks later I found myself dining alone with Adrian Grant, at one of the two restaurants in London. (The cooking is better at the other, this one is the more becoming.) I had lilies-of-the-valley in my button-hole, Adrian was wearing a red carnation. Several people glanced at us. Of course he is very well known in Society. Also, I was looking rather nice, and I could not help hoping, while Adrian gazed rather absently over my head, that the shaded candles were staining to a richer rose the waking wonder of my face.

Adrian was charming of course, but he seemed worried and a little preoccupied, and drank a good deal of champagne.

Towards the end of dinner, he said—almost abruptly for him—"Carington."

"Cecil," I interrupted. He smiled.

"Cissy . . . it seems an odd thing to say to you, but though you are so young, I think you know everything. I am sure you know everything. You know about me. I am in love. I am quite miserable. What on earth am I to do!" He drank more champagne. "Tell me," he said, "what to do." For a few minutes, while we listened to that interminable hackneyed *Intermezzo*, I reflected; asking myself by what strange phases I had risen to the extraordinary position of giving advice to Adrian on such a subject?

Laura was not happy with our father. From a selfish motive, Marjorie and I had practically arranged that monstrous marriage. That very day he had been disagreeable, asking me with a clumsy sarcasm to raise his allowance, so that he could afford my favourite cigarettes. If Adrian were free, Marjorie might refuse Charlie Winthrop. I don't want her to refuse him. Adrian has treated me as a friend. I like him—I like him enormously. I am quite devoted to him. And how can I rid myself of the feeling of responsibility, the sense that I owe some compensation to poor beautiful Laura?

We spoke of various matters. Just before we left the table, I said, with what seemed, but was not, irrelevance, "Dear Adrian, Mrs. Carington——"

"Go on, Cissy."

"She is one of those who must be appealed to, at first, by her imagination. She married our father because she thought he was lonely and misunderstood."

"*I* am lonely and misunderstood," said Adrian, his eyes flashing with delight.

"Ah, not twice! She doesn't like that now."

I finished my coffee slowly, and then I said,

"Go to the Clives' fancy-ball as Tristan."

Adrian pressed my hand. . . .

At the door of the restaurant we parted, and I drove home through the cool April night, wondering, wondering. Suddenly I thought of my mother—my beautiful sainted mother, who would have loved me, I am convinced, had she lived, with an extraordinary devotion. What would she have said to all this? What would she have thought? I know not why, but a mad reaction seized me. I felt recklessly conscientious. My father! After all, he was my father. I was possessed by passionate scruples. If I went back now to Adrian—if I went back and implored him, supplicated him never to see Laura again!

I felt I could persuade him. I have sufficient personal magnetism to do that, if I make up my mind. After one glance in the looking-glass, I put up my stick and stopped the hansom. I had taken a resolution. I told the man to drive to Adrian's rooms.

He turned round with a sharp jerk. In another second a brougham passed us—a swift little brougham that I knew. It slackened—it stopped—we passed it—I saw my father. He was getting out at one of the little houses opposite the Brompton Oratory.

"Turn round again," I shouted to the cabman. And he drove me straight home.

The Sword of Cæsar Borgia

By Richard Garnett, LL.D., C.B.

"Aut Cæsar aut nihil"

WELL hath the graver traced thee, sword of mine!
Here Cæsar by the Rubicon's slow deeps
Ponders; here resolute to empire leaps,
And far and near the smitten waters shine.

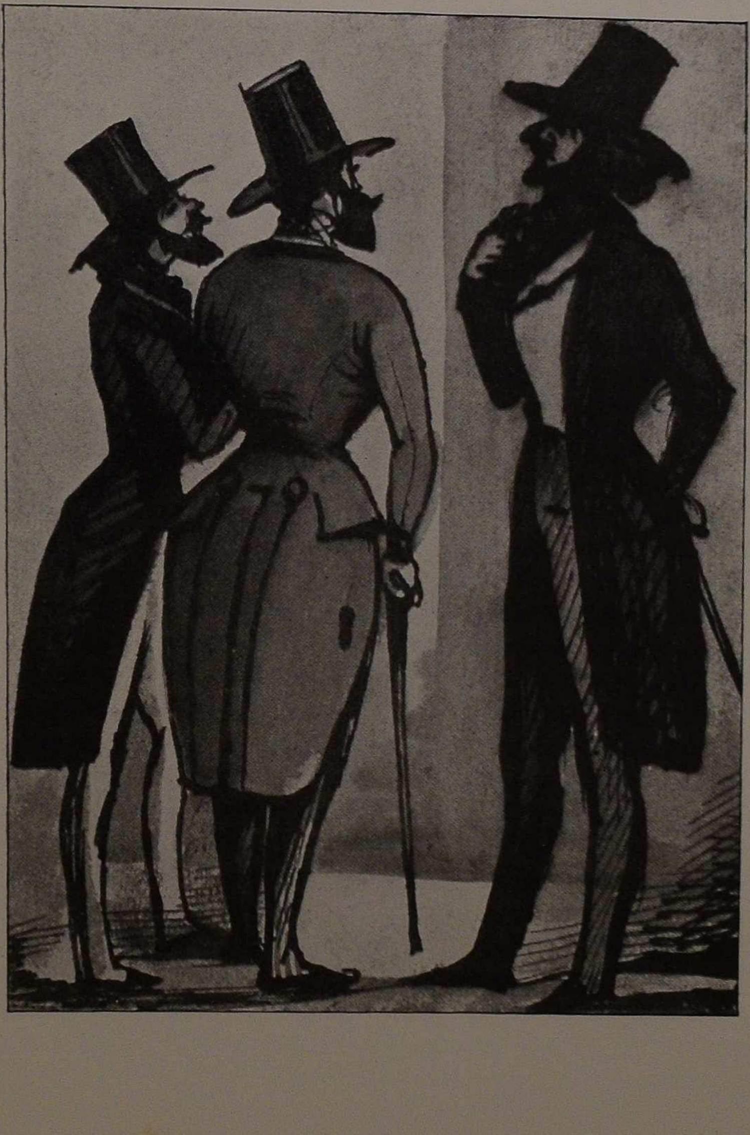
The vanquished train's interminable line
Wends at his wheels up Capitolian steeps;
And round the interlacing legend creeps,
Cæsar or nothing! saith Duke Valentine.

And did I bare thee to the sun, my blade,
Fired at the flash all Italy should thrill,
And many a city quake and province bow.
Yet is a drop within this vial stayed
That should the might of marching armies still,
And stainless sheathe ten thousand such as thou.

A Sketch

By Constantin Guys

By kind permission of F. Pierpont Barnard, Esq.



M. Anatole France

By Maurice Baring

I

"SOYONS des bibliophiles et lisons nos livres, mais ne les prenons point de toutes mains ; soyons délicats, choisissons, et comme le seigneur des comédies de Shakespeare, disons à notre libraire : 'Je veux qu'ils soient bien reliés et qu'ils parlent d'amour.'"

This piece of advice occurs in the preface of the first volume of M. France's collected work : *La vie littéraire*. We are afraid that it would be difficult to prove by statistics that the advice is very largely taken.

The works of certain lady novelists are those which seem to be mostly chosen by the reading public ; and they belong to that class of which Charles Lamb spoke, when he said that some books were not books, but wolves in books' clothing. There is no reason why we should be disturbed by this. It has been pointed out that the reading public has got nothing whatever to do with books. "The reading public subscribes to Mudie, and gets its intellectual like its lacteal subsistence in carts." Happily, there is a little clan of writers who enable us to act upon the advice quoted above. M. France's books are not carried about in carts. They tempt us to choose—them all. They lead us into committing follies at the bookbinders'. And if we are bitterly thinking of the morrow when a bill will come in for the "creamiest Oxford vellum" and "redolent crushed Levant," we may console ourselves by reflecting that we have been fastidious and eclectic, that we have chosen.

M. France's books do not talk of love as much as do many other modern works, yet we think the Shakespearean nobleman would have chosen them to grace his library in preference to the *Heavenly Twins* or the *Yellow Aster*, which handle the theme more technically, perhaps, and certainly with greater exhaustiveness.

II

M. France has chosen a few charming themes, and played them in different keys with many variations. *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* is the contemplation of an old philosophical bachelor ; *Le livre de mon ami* is a child's garden of prose. He has written stories about contemporaries of Solomon, of pre-Evites even (*La fille de Lilith*), and stories about Anglo-Florentines. He has charmed us with philosophy and with fairy-tales, and diverted us with the adventures of poets, politicians, and madmen of every description. His criticism he has defined in a famous phrase as "the adventures of his soul among masterpieces." And his creative works are not so much the observations of a mind among men as the subdued and delicate dreams of a soul that has fallen asleep, tired out by its enchanting adventures. He has himself confessed that he is not a keen observer.

"L'observateur conduit sa vue, le spectateur se laisse prendre par les yeux." Thus it is that the phrase "adventures of the soul" is singularly suited to him. In his whole work we trace the phases and the development of a gentle admiration. In the *Livre de mon ami* M. France tells the story of his childhood—

"Tout dans l'immuable nature
Est miracle aux petits enfants
Ils naissent et leur âme obscure
Eclôt dans des enchantements.
. . . .
Leur tête légère et ravie
Songe tandisque nous pensons ;
Ils font de frissons en frissons
La découverte de la vie."

So he sings about children.

It is very rare that a man of letters can look back through the prison-bars of middle-age with eyes undimmed by the mists of his culture and philosophy, and see the ingenuous phases, the gradual progress from thrill to thrill of awakening, that take place in the soul of a child.

M. France has evoked these early "frissons" with a magic wand. And the penetrating psychology with which childish "états-d'âme" are revealed is no less striking than the charm and poetry which animate them.

The very pulse of the machine is laid bare ; at the same time, the book is as loveable and lovely as a child's poem by Victor Hugo or Robert Louis Stevenson. The hero of the book is Pierre Nosières, a dreamy little boy, fond of pictures and colours ; and the story is written entirely from the point of view of this child.

"Elle était toute petite, ma vie; mais c'était une vie, c'est-a-dire le centre des choses, le milieu du monde."

The grown-up people who enter into Pierre's life are a child's grown-up people; that is, incomprehensible beings who might play at soldiers all day, and yet do not do so. Strange creatures, who will not get up from their easy-chair to look at the moon when they are told she is to be seen.

Mr. Stevenson tells a story of how one day, when he was groaning aloud in physical agony, a little boy came up and asked him if he had seen his cross-bow, ignoring altogether his groans and his contortions. It is exactly what little Pierre would have done. The wall-paper of the drawing-room where Pierre lived had a pattern of dainty rose-buds which were all exactly alike. "Un jour, dans le petit salon, laissant sa broderie, ma mère me souleva dans ses bras; puis, me montrant une des fleurs du papier, elle me dit: je te donne cette rose—et, pour la reconnaître elle la marqua d'une croix avec son poinçon à broder. Jamais présent ne me rendit plus heureux."

Another time Pierre is fired with ambition; he desires to leave the world brighter for his name. Finding that military glory is for the time being out of his reach, and inspired by the "Lives of the Saints," which his mother is in the habit of reading aloud, he decides to go down to posterity as a saint. Reluctantly setting aside martyrdom and missionary work as impracticable, he confines himself to austerities, and commences by leaving his déjeuner untouched, which leads his mother to believe that he is unwell. Then, in emulation of St. Simon Stylites, he begins a life of self-denial on the top of the kitchen pump; but his nurse puts an abrupt end to this mode of existence. St. Nicholas of Patras is the next holy man he tries to imitate. St. Nicholas gave all he had to the poor; Pierre throws his toys out of the window. Pierre's father, who is looking on, calls him a stupid little boy. Pierre is amazed and ashamed, but he soon consoles himself: "Je considérai que mon père n'était pas un Saint comme moi et ne partagerait pas avec moi la gloire des bienheureux."

The next thing he thinks of is a hair-shirt, which he makes by pulling out the horse-hair from an arm-chair. Here again he fails more signally than ever. His nurse, Julie, not apprehending the inward significance of the action, is conscious merely of the outward and visible arm-chair, which is quite spoilt. So she whips Pierre. This opens his eyes to the insurmountable difficulty of being a saint in the family circle, and he understands why St. Antony withdrew to a desert place. He resolves to seclude himself in the maze at the "Jardin des Plantes," and he tells his mother of his plan. She asks what put the idea into his head. He confesses to a desire to be famous and to have "Ermite et Saint du Calendrier" printed on his visiting-cards, just as his father had "Lauréat de l'académie de médecine, etc." on his.

Here his experiments in practical holiness cease. To the young stoic:

"Lust of fame was but a dream
That vanished with the morn,"

although he has often hankered since that day, he confesses, for a life of seclusion in the maze of the Jardin des Plantes.

Not unlike Shelley, who some one has said was perpetually in the frame of mind of saying: "Give me my cabbage and a glass of water, and *let me go into the next room*."

Little Pierre passes through many phases and becomes very clever, very cultured, and very subtle; but the child in him endures and he keeps alive a flame of wistful wonder—wonder at the varicoloured world and the white stars—which is perhaps the greatest charm of M. France's books.

It is true that he frequently laments the absence of the old simple faith which could discern

> "The guardian sprites of wood and rill."

We are no doubt a faithless and prosaic generation, yet if M. France told us that he had heard old Triton blow his wreathëd horn, we should believe him: we should say, at any rate, borrowing one of his own phrases, that the statement was true precisely because it was imaginary.

Before altogether leaving M. France's writings about children, I must mention another supreme achievement in this province: his fairy tale *Abeille*, which is to be found in a collection of short stories called *Balthazar*. Mr. Lang hit the right nail on the head when he said that people do not write good fairy stories now, partly because they do not believe in their own stories, partly because they try to be wittier than it has pleased heaven to make them. M. France believes in *Abeille;* one has only to read the story to be convinced of the fact. As for being wittier than God has pleased to make him, M. France is far too sensible to attempt an almost impossible task.

There is no striving after modernity in *Abeille;* it is neither paradoxical nor elaborate, but a real fairy tale, where there are stately *grandes dames*, trusty squires, perfidious water-nymphs, industrious dwarfs, and disobedient children. It is a genuine fairy tale, told with the sorcery that baffles analysis, which only the elect who believe in fairies can feel and appreciate, whether they find it in *The Odyssey* or in Hans Andersen. Here is a little bit of description which I will quote, just to give an idea of the beauty of M. France's sentences. It is the description of the

magic lake : “ Le sentier descendait en pente douce jusqu’au bord du lac, qui apparut aux deux enfants dans sa languissante et silencieuse beauté. Des saules arrondissaient sur les bords leur feuillage tendre. Des roseaux balançaient sur les eaux leurs glaives souples et leurs délicats panaches ; ils formaient des îles frissonnantes autour desquelles les nénuphars étalaient leurs grandes feuilles en cœur et leurs fleurs à la chair blanche. Sur ces îles fleuries les demoiselles, au corsage d’émeraude ou de saphir et aux ailes de flammes, traçaient d’un vol strident des courbes brusquement brisées.”

III

M. France began his career as a member of the Parnassian Cénacle, of which Paul Verlaine, François Coppée, and Catulle Mendes were members. In a delightful essay on Paul Verlaine (*La vie Littéraire*, vol. iii.) M. France recalls some memories of that irresponsible period. “ Le bon temps,” he calls it, “ où nous n’avions pas le sens commun.” It was at that time that M. France, in the first fine rapture of a Hellenic revival, wrote “ Les Noces Corinthiennes,” a fine and interesting poem, dealing with the melancholy sunset of Paganism and the troubled moonrise of Christianity. It is a period of which he is very fond ; and he has made it the subject of one of his most important books—*Thaïs*.

No one has written about that age with more understanding, for M. France has “ une âme riche et complètement humaine . . . païenne et chrétienne à la fois.” In a beautiful short story, *Lœta Acilia* (*Balthazar*), he tells how Mary Magdalen tries to convert Lœta Acilia, a patrician Roman lady. Lœta Acilia promises to serve the new deity if he send her a son, for although she has been married for five years she is without children. Mary prays that this may happen, and her prayer is granted. Six months afterwards, one day when Lœta is lying languorous and happy on a couch in the court of her home, Mary comes to her and tells her the story of her own conversion. She tells Lœta how the seven devils were cast out of her, and recounts all the ecstasy of her life of love and faith as a disciple, and the wonderful story of her Saviour's death and resurrection. Lœta Acilia's serenity is profoundly disturbed by the tale; reviewing her own existence, she finds it monotonous indeed, compared with the life of this woman, who had loved a God. Her days were occupied with needlework, the quiet practice of her religion, and the companionship of her husband, Helvius, the knight. Her daily round was varied only by the days she went to the circus, or ate cakes with her friends. Bitter jealousy and dark regrets rise in her heart, and bursting into tears she calls on the Jewess to leave the house.

"Méchante femme," she cries, "tu voulais me donner le dégoût de la bonne vie que j'ai menée . . . Je ne veux pas connaître ton Dieu . . . il faut pour lui plaire se prosterner échevelée à ses pieds . . . Je ne veux pas d'une religion qui dérange les coiffures . . . Je n'ai pas été possédée de sept démons, je n'ai pas erré par les chemins; je suis une femme respectable. Va-t'-en!"

Thais also is the story of a conversion in the early Christian times. Thais, the beautiful convert, is less pious and serene than Lœta Acilia, but the conversion is more serious.

The contrast between the end of Paganism and the beginning of Christianity, between the sceptical and brilliant world of Alexandria and the savage life of the Anchorites, is drawn with consummate art. It is a thoughtful story, exquisitely told, containing some of M. France's most brilliant pages and some of his finest touches of irony.

Books of this kind, *Thais*, *Balthazar*, *L'Etui de Nacre*, a collection of little masterpieces in a *genre* which M. France has made his own, and *Le Puits de Sainte Clarie* (his latest published book) is what M. France has done by the way, so to speak. In these we do not trace the growth of his mind so much as in his other books. But as far as perfection of form and delicacy of touch go, they are perhaps the most finished things he has done. Were he to republish the series under one name, we should recommend—

"Marguerites pour les pourceaux."

IV

After the dreamy childhood of little Pierre comes the feverish period of youth ; there is an agitated violence about M. France's work of that time which completely disappears later on.

Les Désirs de Jean Servian, a study of youthful, ineffectual passion, is rather crude and unsatisfactory ; M. France has not yet found his medium. *Jocaste* is a violent piece of melodrama, set in an atmosphere of hard pessimism. *Le Chat Maigre* is merely an interlude, a caprice of fancy. Yet here M. France has a subject after his own heart, and he is completely successful. It is the story of a youth who comes from Haiti to pass his *baccalauréat ;* he lives in a *cénacle* of madmen, and so vague and irresponsible is he himself, that it never occurs to him that they are mad. M. France's love of madmen, of the *fantoches* of humanity, is one of his most decided characteristics. He draws a distinction between madness and insanity. Madness, he says, is only a kind of intellectual originality. Insanity is the loss of the intellectual faculties. M. France leavens all his books with mad characters, introducing us like this to the most quaint and amusing types.

In these early books M. France was giving vent to the various phases of his youth. The restless preludes played on the tremulous reeds were soon to be merged into the broad music of the mellow diapasons. This is satisfactory; because although in the crisis of youth Moses often becomes Aaron, and expression wells from the hard rock, it less frequently happens that Hamlet becomes Prospero.

Again it often happens that Prospero is not only deserted by Ariel, but he is left, as Mr. Arthur Benson says,

> "Pent in the circle of a rugged isle . . .
> . . . .
> Without his large philosophy, without
> Miranda, and alone with Caliban."

In M. France's case the shifting restlessness of youth has only helped to make middle-age more tolerant, as we note in *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*.

Le Jardin d'Epicure, M. France's penultimate book, is a garden fit for Prospero, a Prospero who has not perhaps forgotten the

> "Old agitations of myrtles and roses."

A garden where there is a somewhat more voluptuous fragrance than

> "A rosemary odour comingled with pansies,
> With rue and the beautiful Puritan pansies."

Let us now examine M. France's riper works more closely.

Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard is M. France's masterpiece, or one of his masterpieces. It consists of two stories: *La Bûche* and *Le Crime* proper. The story of each is simplicity itself. In the one case M. Bonnard hankers after a rare MS., which is at last presented to him by a Russian princess whom he had once helped, when she was poor, by sending her a *bûche*. Another time, M. Bonnard rescues an orphan girl from a school where she is unhappy and contracts a happy marriage for her : that is his crime. M. Bonnard is a member of the Institute, a bachelor and a bibliophile, seventy years old, with a large nose that betrays his feelings. He is afraid of his housekeeper, and rather fond of dainty cooking and old wine. He overflows with bavardage and entertains his cat with suggestive philosophy, beautifully expressed. Kindness, tolerance, and irony are his chief characteristics ; his sole prejudice being the pretension of having no prejudices. "Cette prétention," says M. France (or does M. Bonnard say it about some one else?), "était à elle seule un gros préjugé. Il détestait le fanatisme, mais il avait celui de la tolérance." It applies to M. Bonnard in any case. M. Bonnard is a child at heart, and his tenderness is exquisite. Delightful, too, is his pedantry, which leads him to handle romantic subjects and ideas with the most elegant precision and unfaltering exactitude. As for his language, it is the purest and most distinguished French ; it is needless to say more. We will confine ourselves to quoting one sentence. "Etoiles qui avez lui sur la tête legère ou pesante de tous mes ancêtres oubliés, c'est à votre clarté que je sens s'éveiller en moi un regret douloureux. Je voudrais un fils qui vous voie encore quand je ne serai plus."

The complement of Sylvestre Bonnard is the Abbé Jérome Coignard, the hero of *La Rôtisserie de la reine Pédauque*. M. Coignard, who lived and died in the last century, was a priest "abondant en riants propos et en belles manières." Erudite and scholar though he was, he sought for happiness in other places besides *in angello.* He culled other flowers besides the "bloomless buds" which grow in the garden of the goddess who is "crowned with calm leaves," which would certainly have been Sylvestre Bonnard's favourite garden. The difference is that L'Abbé Coignard is an eighteenth-century priest, and "behaves as such." The Abbé considers that the maxims of philosophers who seek to establish a natural morality are but "lubies et billevesées."

"La raison des bonnes mœurs ne se trouve point dans la nature qui est, par elle-même, indifferente, ignorant le mal comme le bien. Elle est dans la parole divine qu'il ne faut pas transgresser, à moins de s'en repentir ensuite convenablement."

The laws of men, he says, are founded on utility, a fallacious utility, since no one knows what in reality befits men and is useful to them. For this reason he breaks them, and is ready to do it again and again.

"Les plus grands saints sont des pénitents, et comme le repentir se proportionne à la faute, c'est dans les plus grands pécheurs que se trouve l'étoffe des plus grands saints." The Abbé Coignard's pupil, the simple-minded Jaques Tournebroche, expresses his fear lest this doctrine, in practice, should lead men into wild licence:

"Ce que vous appelez désordres," rejoins the Abbé, "n'est tel en effet que dans l'opinions des juges tant civils qu' écclésiastiques, et par rapport aux lois humaines, qui sont arbitraires et transitoires, et qu'en un mot *se conduire selon ces lois est le fait d'une âme moutonnière.*

"Un homme d'esprit ne se pique pas d'agir selon les règles en usage au châtelet et chez l'official. *Il s'inquiète de faire son salut et il ne se croit pas déshonoré pour aller au ciel par les voies détournées que suivirent les plus grands saints.*"

It is, therefore, by the primrose path that M. l'Abbé seeks his salvation, relying on the cleansing dews of repentance. He is the most subtle and entertaining arguer conceivable, but his voyage to salvation by a "voie detournée" is nevertheless brought to an abrupt end. In abetting the elopement of a lovely Jewess with a young marquis, he is pursued by the Jewess's angry father, who takes him to be his daughter's seducer, and murders him on the Lyons road. He died at the age of fifty-eight, after receiving the last sacraments, in an odour of repentance and sanctity, and earnestly urging his young pupil to disregard his old advice and forget his philosophy:

"N'écoute point ceux, qui comme moi, subtilesent sur le bien et le mal . . . Le royaume de Dieu ne consiste pas dans les paroles mais dans la vertu."

These were his last words, and in dying he made it possible for his pupil to obey him. Fortunately we are still able to be led astray by the subtlety of his discourses. They almost make us doubt whether the Kingdom of Heaven does not sometimes consist in words. We may add that "Les opinions de Jérome Coignard" is perhaps a more edifying book than "La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque," where his discourses are blent with a record of his deeds.

We have now considered almost all M. France's works, with the exception of *Le Lys Rouge*, which stands apart as his sole effort in the province of the modern analytic novel. The book is not very characteristic of M. France, although it contains some brilliant writing, notably a dialogue, near the beginning, on Napoleon, and a fine study of an artist's jealousy; the Florentine atmosphere also is successfully rendered; but we would willingly give up the romantic part of the book for one of the Abbé Coignard's discourses or Sylvestre Bonnard's reveries.

V

"L'artiste doit aimer la vie et nous montrer qu'elle est belle. Sans lui nous en douterions."

M. France has accomplished the task beautifully. Nevertheless, the shadows of irony which temper the colour of his dream let us more than suspect that "even while singing the song of the Sirens, he still hearkens to the barking of the Sphinx." Like Mr. Stevenson, he has struck sombre and eloquent chords on the theme of *pulvis et umbra*. He loves to remind us that a time will come when our descendants, diminishing fast on an icy and barren earth, will be as brutal and brainless as our cave-dwelling ancestors.

Mr. Andrew Lang thinks that the last man will read the poems of Shelley in his cavern by the light of a little oil, in order to see once more the glory of sunset and sunrise, and the "hues of earthquake and eclipse." This is hopeful; but we are afraid M. France's theory is the more probable. The last man will be too stupid and too cold to read Shelley in a cave.

At the same time, although M. France is fond of telling us that man can save nothing—

> "On the sands of life, in the straits of time,
> Who swims in front of a great third wave,
> That never a swimmer may cross or climb"—

he is yet of opinion that the pastimes of the beach are pleasant, and can be peacefully enjoyed, in spite of the billows that may be looming in the distance. He defends the follies of the book-collector with warmth and elegance on that score:

"Il faudrait plutôt les envier puisqu'ils ont orné leur vie d'une longue et paisible volupté . . . Que peut-on faire de plus honnête que de mettre des livres dans une armoire ? Cela rappelle beaucoup à la vérité la tâche que se donne les enfants, quand ils font des tas de sable au bord de la mer. . . . La mer emporte les tas de sable, le commissaire-priseur disperse les collections. Et pourtant on n'a rien de mieux à faire que des tas de sable à dix ans et des collection à soixante."

M. France is neither a pessimist nor an optimist, but both ; since he feels that the world is neither good nor bad, but good *and* bad.

"Le mal," he says "est l'unique raison du bien. Que serait le courage loin du péril et la pitié sans la douleur ? "

Had he made the world, he tells us, he would have made man in the image of an insect :

"J'aurais voulu que l'homme . . . accomplît d'abord, à l'état de larve, les travaux dégoutants par lesquels il se nourrit. En cette phase, il n'y aurait point eu de sens, et la faim n'aurait point avili l'amour. Puis j'aurais fait de sorte que, dans une transformation dernière, l'homme et la femme, deployant des ailes étincelantes, vécussent de rosée et de désir et mourussent dans un baiser." As, however, we are made on a somewhat different plan, M. France puts his faith in two goddesses—Irony and Pity :

"L'une en souriant nous rend la vie aimable, l'autre qui pleure nous la rend sacrée. L'ironie que j'invoque n'est point cruelle. Elle ne raille ni l'amour ni la beauté . . . son rire calme la colère et c'est elle qui nous enseigne à nous moquer des méchants et des sots, que nous pourrions, sans elle, avoir la faiblesse de haïr."

The burden and keynote of M. France's works may be found in the most blessed words of the blessed saint : "Everywhere I have sought for happiness and found it nowhere, save in a corner with a book."

VI

To sum up, we have in M. Anatole France a fastidious and distinguished artist in prose; an inventor of fantastic and delightful characters; a thinker whose ingenious and suggestive philosophy is based on the solid foundations of thorough scholarship. His stories are as delicate as thin shells, and their subtle echo evokes the music of the wide seas. On the other hand, his critical essays are so graceful that they read like fairy tales. The lightness and grace of his work have made serious people shake their heads. They forget that a graceful use of the snaffle is more masterly than an ostentatious control of the curb.

"A good style," M. France says, "is like a ray of sunlight, which owes its luminous purity to the combination of the seven colours of which it is composed."

M. France's style has precisely this luminous and complicated simplicity. But a reader unacquainted as yet with M. France's work must not expect too much. M. France's talent is subdued and limited. He is not an inventor of wonderful romance; he has never peered into the depths of the human soul; neither has his work the concise and masculine strength of a writer like Guy de Maupassant. He contemplates life from the Garden of Epicurus, smiling in plaintive tranquillity at the grotesque and tragic masks of the human comedy.

> "L'ambition, l'amour, égaux en leur délire,
> Et l'inutile encens brulé sur les autels."

What the reader must expect to find in his books is an exquisite puppet-show, puppet-show, where fanciful comedies and fairy interludes are interpreted by adorable marionnettes. M. France is not a player of the thunderous organ or the divine violin ; his instrument is rather a pensive pianoforte, on which with an incomparable touch he plays delicate preludes and wistful nocturnes.

The Call

By Norman Gale

> "Now she was deserted by her husband, and there was a man would die for her."

Tho' the mist is on the mountain, yet the sun is on the sea.
Don't you hear me calling, comrade, calling you to follow me ?
For my love is for your bosom, and my hand is for your hand,
Don't you hear me calling, comrade ? Will you never understand ?

Here I want you, in the country, where the cowslip nods asleep,
Where the palm is by the water, where the peace is doubly deep ;
Where the finches chirp at matins in a green and lovely land—
Don't you hear, my thorn and blossom ? Don't you feel to understand ?

If my voice is not melodious, lo, the thrush shall aid my voice ;
Ev'ry linnet in the orchard has a trill to praise my choice :
Shall I bide a barren singer in this valley full of mist,
Unennobled, unattended, wanting you, and all unkissed ?

Oceans part us, leagues divide us ; but our spirits know a link ;
Why should you not come, my dearest, thinking warmly as you
think ?
Must I call you by a singing who should call you by my soul,
Call you by a part, belovëd, who should call you by the whole ?

By this pear-tree robed for bridal, by the sun and by the dew,
By the nightingale that tells me midnight melodies of you,
By the virgin streamlet flowing ever faithful to its spouse,
Here I set my heart before you, promise of a happy house !

Is your blood the blood of battle ? Have you courage for the
fight ?
Can the lane content you always with its barren and its bright ?
Do you feel the glow of mating in the heart where I would be,
When you hear me calling, calling, calling you to come to me ?

Well I know my spirit travels over meadowland and steep,
Soon its whisper in your tresses will arouse my dove from sleep ;
'Tis a message calls to daring, 'tis a voice that bids you wake—
Let it fall as balm upon you, balm to help the strong heart-break.

Come at once o'er mead and mountain, sending first that ghostly
cheer
Felt by souls that kiss together tho' no earthly lips are near ;
Bring my country Heaven, dearest, finer fruit and sweeter dew,
Bring across the leagues that part us all the honey, love, of you.

Take me, trust me. Stars may fail us, friends may leave us.
What is this ?
God shall watch us plight together with, as only priest, a kiss.

If we lose we also gain, for life is chance, and chances blend—
Are you coming to the valley? Answer thro' the darkness, friend.

I am standing in the valley; slumber takes your golden head,
But my spirit flies to stir you in the whiteness of your bed—
In that garden where are clustered in the keeping of the south
All the lilies of your bosom, and the rosebud of your mouth.

Don't you hear me calling, comrade, don't you hear me calling sweet,
For the fragrance of your coming and the freedom of your feet?
O, my love is for your loving, and my help is for your hand—
Don't you hear me calling, comrade? Will you never understand?

L'Evêché de Tourcoing

Par Anatole France

M. LE PRÉFET WORMS-CLAVELIN causait avec M. l'abbé Guitrel dans le magasin de Rondonneau jeune, orfèvre et bijoutier. M. Worms-Clavelin était ce jour-là de très bonne humeur. Il se renversa dans un fauteuil et croisa les jambes de sorte qu'une semelle des bottines se dressait vers le menton du doux vieillard.

— Monsieur l'abbé, vous avez beau dire ; vous êtes un prêtre éclairé ; vous voyez dans la religion un ensemble de prescriptions morales, une discipline nécessaire, et non point des dogmes surannés, des mystères dont l'absurdité n'est que trop peu mystérieuse.

M. Guitrel avait, comme prêtre, d'excellentes règles de conduite. L'une de ces règles était d'éviter le scandale, et de se taire plutôt que d'exposer la vérité aux risées des incrédules. Et, comme cette précaution s'accordait avec la prudence de son caractère, il l'observait exactement. Mais M. le préfet Worms-Clavelin manquait de discrétion. Son nez vaste et charnu, ses lèvres épaisses, apparaissaient comme de puissants appareils pour pomper et pour absorber, tandis que son front fuyant, sous de gros yeux pâles, trahissaient la résistance à toute délicatesse morale. Il insista, poussa contre les dogmes chrétiens des arguments de loges maçonniques et de cafés littéraires, conclut qu'il était impossible à un homme intelligent de croire un mot du catéchisme ; puis, abattant sur l'épaule du prêtre sa grosse main à bagues, il dit :

— Vous ne répondez rien, mon cher abbé, vous êtes de mon avis.

M. Guitrel, martyre en quelque manière, dut confesser sa foi.

— Pardonnez moi, monsieur le préfet, ce petit livre, qu'on affecte de mépriser en certains milieux, le catéchisme, contient plus de vérités que les gros traités de philosophie qui mènent si grand bruit par le monde. Le catéchisme joint la métaphysique la plus savante à la plus efficace simplicité. Cette appréciation n'est pas de moi, elle est d'un philosophe éminent, M. Jules Simon, qui met le catéchisme audessus du Timée de Platon.

Le préfet n'osa rien opposer au jugement d'un ancien ministre Il lui souvint en même temps que son supérieur hiérarchique, le ministre actuel de l'intérieur, était protestant. Il dit :

— Comme fonctionnaire, je respecte également tous les cultes, le protestantisme et le catholicisme. En tant qu'homme je suis libre penseur, et si j'avais une préférence dogmatique, permettez moi de vous dire, monsieur l'abbé, qu'elle serait en faveur de la réforme.

Guitrel doux et têtu, repondit d'une voix onctueuse :

— Il y a sans doute parmi les protestants des personnes éminemment estimables au point de vue des mœurs, et j'ose dire des personnes exemplaires, mais l'église prétendue réformée n'est qu'un membre tranché de l'église catholique, et l'endroit de la rupture saigne encore.

Indifférent à cette forte parole, empruntée à Bossuet, M. le préfet tira de son étui un gros cigare, l'alluma, puis tendant l'étui au prêtre :

— Voulez vous accepter un cigare, monsieur l'abbé ?

N'ayant aucune idée de la discipline ecclésiastique, et croyant que le tabac à fumer était interdit aux membres du clergé, c'était pour l'embarrasser ou le séduire, qu'il offrait un cigare à M. Guitrel. Dans son ignorance il croyait, par ce présent, induire le porteur de soutane en péché, le faire tomber dans la désobeissance, peut être dans le sacrilège et presque dans l'apostasie. Mais M. Guitrel prit tranquillement le cigare, le coula avec précaution dans la poche de sa douillette, et dit avec bonne grâce, qu'il le fumerait après souper, dans sa chambre.

Ainsi M. le préfet Worms-Clavelin et M. l'abbé Guitrel, professeur d'éloquence sacrée au grand séminaire, conversaient dans le cabinet de l'orfèvre. Près d'eux Rondonneau jeune, fournisseur de l'archevêché, qui travaillait aussi pour la préfecture, assistait discrètement à l'entretien, sans y prendre part. Il faisait son courrier, et l'on ne voyait que son crâne nu sur la table chargée de régistres et d'échantillons d'orfèvrerie commerciale.

Brusquement M. le préfet se mit debout, poussa M. l'abbé Guitrel à l'autre bout de la pièce, dans l'embrasure de la fenêtre, et lui dit à l'oreille :

— Mon cher Guitrel, vous savez que l'évêché de Tourcoing est vacant.

— J'ai appris en effet, répondit le prêtre, la mort de monseigneur Duclou. C'est une grande perte pour l'église. Monseigneur Duclou avait autant de mérite que de modestie. Et il excellait dans l'homélie. Ses instructions pastorales sont des modèles d'éloquence parénétique. Oserai-je rappeler que je l'ai connu à Orléans, du temps qu'il était encore M. l'abbé Duclou, le vénérable Curé de Saint-Euverte, et qu'à cette époque il daignait m'honorer de sa bienveillante amitié ? La nouvelle de sa fin prématurée a été particulièrement douloureuse pour moi.

Il se tut, laissant pendre ses lèvres en signe d'affliction.

— Ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'agit, dit le préfet. Il est mort ; il s'agit de le remplacer.

M. Guitrel avait changé de figure. Maintenant il faisait des petits yeux tous ronds, comme un rat qui voit le lard dans le garde-manger.

— Vouz concevez, mon cher Guitrel, reprit le préfet, que toute cette affaire ne me regarde en aucune façon. Ce n'est pas moi qui nomme les évêques. Je ne suis pas le garde des Sceaux, ni le pape, Dieu merci !

Il se mit à rire.

— A propos, en quels termes êtes vous avec le nonce ?

— Le nonce, monsieur le préfet, me regarde avec bienveillance, comme un enfant soumis et respectueux du Saint Père.

— Mon cher abbé, si je vous parle de cette affaire—tout à fait entre nous, n'est ce pas ? — c'est qu'il est question d'envoyer à Tourcoing un prêtre de mon chef-lieu. Je sais de bonne source qu'on met en avant le nom de M. l'abbé Lantaigne, directeur du grand séminaire, et il n'est pas impossible que je sois appelé à fournir des notes confidentielles sur le candidat. Il est votre supérieur hiérarchique. Que pensez vous de lui ?

M. Guitrel, les yeux baissés, répondit :

— Il est certain que M. l'abbé Lantaigne porterait sur le siége épiscopal sanctifié jadis par Saint Loup des vertus éminentes et les dons précieux de la parole. Ses carêmes prêchés à Saint-Exupère ont été justement appréciés pour l'ordonnance des idées et la force de l'expression, et l'on s'accorde à reconnaître qu'il ne manquerait rien à la perfection de quelques uns de ses sermons, s'il s'y trouvait cette onction, cette huile parfumée et bénie, oserai-je dire, qui seule pénètre les cœurs. M. le Curé de Saint-Exupère s'est plu le premier à déclarer que M. Lantaigne, en portant la parole dans la chaire de Saint-Exupère avait bien mérité de ce grand apôtre des Gaules par un zèle dont les excès même trouvent leur excuse dans leur source charitable. Il a déploré seulement les incursions de l'orateur dans le domaine de l'histoire contemporaine. Car il faut avouer que M. Lantaigne ne craint pas de marcher sur des cendres encore brûlantes. M. Lantaigne est éminent par la piété, la science et le talent. Quel dommage que ce prêtre, digne d'être élevé aux plus hauts degrés de la hiérarchie, croie devoir afficher un attachement louable sans doute dans son principe, mais immodéré dans ses effets, à une famille exilée dont il reçut les bienfaits ? Il se plaît à montrer un exemplaire de *l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, qui lui fut donné, couvert de pourpre et d'or, par madame la Comtesse de Paris, et il étale trop volontiers les pompes de sa fidélité et de sa reconnaissance. Et quel malheur que la superbe, excusable peut être dans un si beau génie, l'emporte jusqu'à parler sous les quinconces, publiquement, de Monseigneur le Cardinal-archevêque en des termes que je n'ose rapporter ! Hélas ! à défaut de ma voix, tous les arbres du mail vous rediront ces paroles tombées de la bouche de M. Lantaigne, en présence de M. Borgeret, professeur à la faculté des lettres : "En esprit seulement Sa Grandeur observe la pauvreté évangélique." Il est coutumier de tels propos, et ne l'entendit-on pas dire à la dernière ordination, quand Sa Grandeur s'avança revêtu de ses ornements pontificaux, qu'il porte avec tant de noblesse malgré sa petite taille : "Crosse d'or, évêque de bois." Il censurait ainsi, mal à propos, la magnificence avec laquelle Monseigneur Charlot se plaît à régler l'ordonnance de ses repas officiels, et notamment du dîner qu'il donna au général commandant le cinquième corps d'armée, et auquel vous fûtes prié, monsieur le préfet. Et c'est particulièrement votre présence à l'archevêché qui offusquait M. l'abbé Lantaigne, trop enclin malheureusement à prolonger, au mépris des préceptes de Saint Paul et des enseignements de Sa Sainteté Leon XIII, les pénibles malentendus dont souffrent également l'Eglise et l'Etat.

Le préfet tendait les oreilles et ouvrait la bouche toute grande, ayant coutume d'écouter par la bouche.

— Mais, dit-il, ce Lantaigne est imbu du plus détestable esprit clérical. Il m'en veut? Que me reproche-til? Ne suis-je pas assez tolérant, libéral? N'ai-je pas fermé les yeux quand de toutes parts les moines, les sœurs, rentraient dans les couvents, dans les écoles? Car si nous maintenons énergiquement les lois essentielles de la république, nous ne les appliquons guères. Mais les prêtres sont incorrigibles. Vous êtes tous les mêmes. Vous criez qu'on vous opprime tant que vous n'opprimez pas. Et que dit-il de moi, votre Lantaigne?

— On ne peut rien articuler de formel contre l'administration de M. le préfet Worms-Clavelin, mais une âme intransigeante comme M. Lantaigne, ne vous pardonne ni votre affiliation à la franc-maçonnerie, ni vos origines israélites.

Le préfet secoua la cendre de son cigare.

— Les juifs, dit-il, ne sont pas mes amis. Je n'ai pas d'attaches dans le monde juif. Mais soyez tranquille, mon cher abbé, je vous fiche mon billet que M. Lantaigne ne sera pas évêque de Tourcoing. J'ai assez d'influence dans les bureaux pour lui faire échec. Ecoutez bien, Guitrel ; je n'avais pas d'argent, quand j'ai débuté dans la vie. Je me suis fait des relations. Les relations valent la fortune. Et moi, j'ai de belles relations. Je veillerai à ce que l'abbé Lantaigne se casse le cou dans les bureaux. D'ailleurs ma femme a un candidat à l'évêché de Tourcoing. Et ce candidat c'est vous, Guitrel.

A ce mot, l'abbé Guitrel leva les bras et baissa les yeux.

— Moi, dit-il, m'asseoir dans le siége sanctifié par le bienheureux Loup et par tant de pieux apôtres des Gaules septentrionales. Madame Worms-Clavelin a-t-elle eu cette pensée?

— Mon cher Guitrel, elle veut que vous portiez la mitre. Et je vous assure qu'elle est de force à faire un évêque. Je vous surprendrais bien si je vous nommais le ministre qui lui doit son portefeuille. Et moi même je ne serai pas faché de donner à la république un évêque républicain.

M. Guitrel, soupirant, versa des paroles indistinctes qui coulaient de ses lèvres comme le murmure d'une source cachée.

— Il est vrai que je porterais dans les fonctions épiscopales cet esprit de soumission aux pouvoirs établis qui est, à mon sens, eminemment chrétien. Toute puissance vient de Dieu, celle de la république comme les autres. C'est une maxime dont je suis intimement pénétré.

Le préfet approuva de la tête.

— C'est entendu, mon cher Guitrel ; voyez l'archevêque et le nonce ; ma femme et moi, nous ferons agir les bureaux.

Et M. Guitrel murmurait les mains jointes :

— Le siége antique et vénérable de Tourcoing !

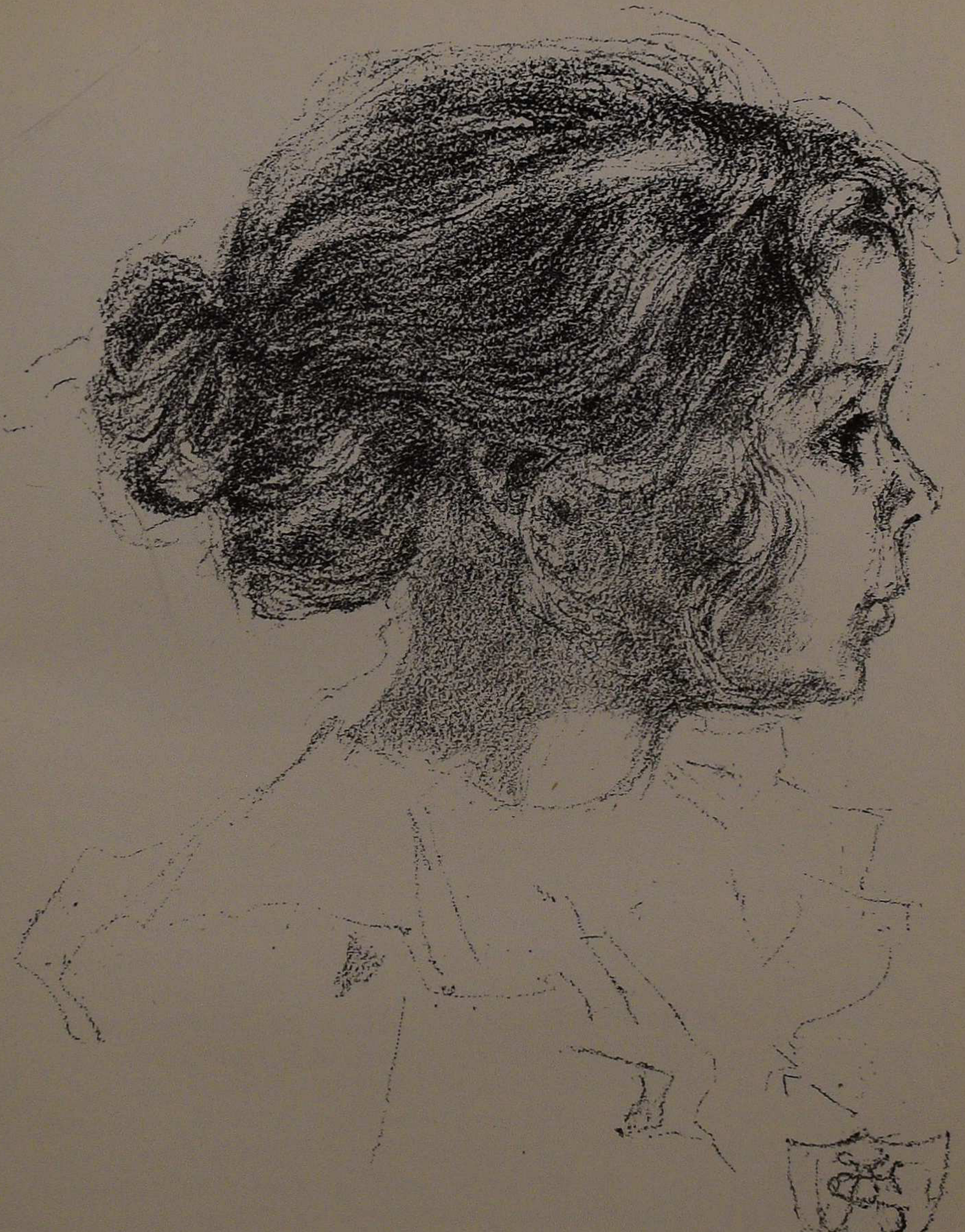
— Un évêché de troisième classe, un trou, mon cher abbé. Mais il faut commencer. Tenez ! moi, savez vous où j'ai fait mes débuts dans l'administration ? A Céret ! J'ai été sous préfet de Céret, dans les Pyrénees-Orientales ! Adieu, monseigneur.

Le préfet tendit la main au prêtre. Et M. Guitrel s'en alla par la tortueuse rue des Tintelleries, humble, le dos rond, méditant des démarches savantes et se promettant, au jour où il porterait la mitre et tiendrait la crosse, de résister, en prince de l'église, au gouvernement civil, de combattre les franc-maçons, et de jeter l'anathême aux principes de la libre pensée, de la république, et de la révolution.

*

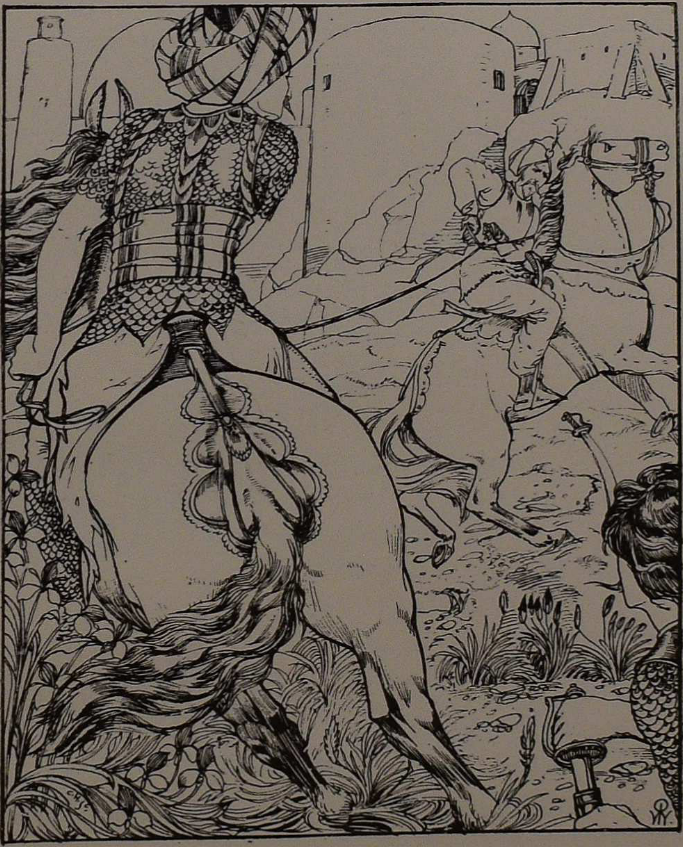
Study of a Head

By Sydney Adamson



A Drawing

By Patten Wilson



Fleet Street Eclogue*

St. George's Day

By John Davidson

Basil. Menzies. Percy. Brian. Herbert. Sandy.

Menzies.

What thought may burst the bond
Of rasping spleen ?
What hope its victim soothe ?
What dream assuage his pains ?

Herbert.

An old stile stands between
Two beeches silvery smooth,
All carved and kissed by lovers fond.

Menzies.

The foolish country swains !

---

* Copyright in America by John Lane.

Herbert.

HERBERT.

Oh! but the old stile stands,
For ever dear to me—
Foot-worn, its bars by many hands
Polished like ebony!

MENZIES.

But me my city spleen
Holds in a fretting bond.

HERBERT.

And the quickset hedges mantle green,
And the fields roll green beyond;
While the antique footpath winds about
By farms and little towns,
By waterways, and in and out,
And up and over the downs.

MENZIES.

I hear the idle workmen's sighs;
I hear their children's hungry cries;
I hear the burden of the years;
I hear the drip of women's tears;
I hear despair, whose tongue is dumb,
Speak thunder in the ruthless bomb.

SANDY.

But why keep brooding over ill?
Why hearken such discordant tones?

HERBERT.

We dream, we sing ; we drive the quill
To keep the flesh upon our bones :
Therefore what trade have we with wrongs,
With ways and woes that spoil our songs ?

MENZIES.

None, none ! Alas, there lies the sting !
We see, we feel, but cannot aid ;
We hide our foolish heads and sing ;
We live, we die ; and all is said.

HERBERT.

To wonder-worlds of old romance
Our aching thoughts for solace run.

BRIAN.

And some have stolen fire from France.

SANDY.

And some adore the Midnight Sun.

MENZIES.

I, too, for light the world explore,
And, trembling, tread where angels trod ;
Devout at every shrine adore,
And follow after each new god.

But by the altar everywhere
I find the money-changer's stall ;
And littering every temple-stair
The sick and sore like maggots crawl.

BRIAN.

Hush, hush !

MENZIES.

I cannot hush ! The poor,
The maimed, the halt, the starving come,
Crying for help at every door ;
But loud the ecclesiastic drum
Outbids them ; and behind it wait
The bones and cleavers of the State.

SANDY.

This smacks of Disestablishment !

BRIAN.

We'll find him next attacking Rent !

BASIL.

Your talk is vain ; your voice is hoarse.

MENZIES.

I would they were as hoarse and vain
As their wide-weltering spring and source
Of helpless woe, of wrath insane.

HERBERT.

Why will you hug the coast of Hell?

BRIAN.

Why antedate the Judgment Day?

MENZIES.

Nay, flout me not; you know me well.

BASIL.

Right, comrade! Give your fancy way.

MENZIES.

I cannot see the stars and flowers,
Nor hear the lark's soprano ring,
Because a ruddy darkness lowers
For ever, and the tempests sing.
I see the strong coerce the weak,
And labour overwrought rebel;
I hear the useless treadmill creak,
The prisoner, cursing in his cell;
I see the loafer-burnished wall;
I hear the rotting match-girl whine;
I see the unslept switchman fall;
I hear the explosion in the mine;
I see along the heedless street
The sandwichmen trudge through the mire;
I hear the tired quick-tripping feet

Of sad, gay girls who ply for hire ;
I hear the gibbering of the mad ;
Sinister workhouse folk I note ;
I mark the sable ironclad
In every sound and channel float,
The growl of armies, bound in chains
Of parchment peace that chafes and frets
Their seven-leagued limbs and bristled manes
Of glittering bayonets,
The glowing blast, the fire-shot smoke,
Where guns are forged and armour-plate,
The mammoth hammer's pounding stroke—
The din of our dread iron date ;
And always divers undertones
Within the roaring tempest throb—
The chink of gold, the labourer's groans,
The infant's wail, the woman's sob :
Hoarsely they beg of Fate to give
A little lightening of their woe,
A little time to love, to live,
A little time to think and know.
I see where in the East may rise
Some unexpected dreadful dawn—
The gleam of steeled and scowling eyes,
A flash of women's faces wan !

BASIL.

This is St. George's Day.

MENZIES.

St. George ? A wretched thief, I vow.

HERBERT.

Nay, Menzies, you should rather say,
St. George for Merry England, now!

SANDY.

That surely is a phantom cry,
Hollow and vain for many years.

MENZIES.

I hear the idle workmen sigh;
I hear the drip of women's tears.

BASIL.

I hear the laughing, singing voice
Of Shakespeare warming England through;
His birthday, this.

HERBERT.

Again rejoice,
For this is Wordsworth's birthday, too.

MENZIES.

I hear the agitator shout;
I hear the broker cheapen love;
I hear poor ladies crying out
For license men are weary of.

HERBERT.

I hear the lofty lark,
The lowly nightingale.

BASIL.

The Present is a dungeon dark
Of social problems. Break the gaol!
Get out into the splendid Past,
Or bid the splendid Future hail.

MENZIES.

Nor then, nor now, nor first, nor last,
I know. The slave of ruthless Law,
To me Time seems a dungeon vast
Where Life lies rotting in the straw.

BASIL.

I care not for your images
Of Life and Law. I want to sing
Of England and of Englishmen
Who made our country what it is.

HERBERT.

And I to praise the English Spring.

PERCY.

St. George for Merry England, then!

MENZIES.

There is no England now, I fear.

BASIL.

No England, say you ; and since when ?

MENZIES.

Cockney and Celt and Scot are here,
And Democrats and "ans" and "ists"
In clubs and cliques and divers lists ;
But now we have no Englishmen.

BASIL.

You utter what you never felt,
I know. By bog and mount and fen,
No Saxon, Norman, Scot, or Celt
I find, but only Englishmen.

HERBERT.

In all our hedges roses bud.

BASIL.

And thought and speech are more than blood.

HERBERT.

Away with spleen, and let us sing
The English Spring, the English Spring !

BASIL.

In weeds of gold and purple hues
Glad April bursts with piping news
Of swifts and swallows come again,
And of the tender pensive strain
The bullfinch sings from bush to bush.

PERCY.

And oh! the blackbird and the thrush
Interpret as no maestro may
The meaning of the night and day.

SANDY.

They catch the whispers of the breeze
And weave them into melodies.

BRIAN.

They utter for the hours that pass
The purpose of their moments bright.

BASIL.

They speak the passion of the grass,
That grows so stoutly day and night.

HERBERT.

St. George for Merry England then!
For we are all good Englishmen!

PERCY.

We stand as our forefathers stood
For Liberty's and Conscience' sake.

HERBERT.

We are the sons of Robin Hood,
The sons of Hereward the Wake.

PERCY.

The sons of yeomen, English-fed,
Ready to feast or drink or fight.

HERBERT.

The sons of kings—of Hal and Ned,
Who kept their island right and tight.

PERCY.

The sons of Cromwell's Ironsides,
Who knew no king but God above.

BASIL.

We are the sons of English brides,
Who married Englishmen for love.

SANDY.

Oh, now I see Fate's means and ends!
The Bruce and Wallace wight I ken,

Who saved old Scotland from its friends,
Were mighty northern Englishmen.

BRIAN.

And Parnell, who so greatly fought
To make a mob people, then
With Fate inevitably wrought
That Irish should be Englishmen.

BASIL.

By bogland, highland, down, and fen,
All Englishmen, all Englishmen !

MENZIES.

There is no England now, I say—

BRIAN.

No England now ? My grief, my grief !

MENZIES.

We lie widespread, the dragon-prey
Of any Cappadocian thief.
In Arctic and Pacific seas
We lounge and loaf ; and either pole
We reach with sprawling colonies—
Unwieldy limbs that lack a soul.

BASIL.

St. George for Greater England, then!
The Boreal and the Austral men!
They reverence the heroic roll
Of Englishmen who sang and fought:
They have a soul, a mighty soul,
The soul of English speech and thought.

SANDY.

And when the soul of England slept—

BASIL.

St. George for foolish England, then!—

SANDY.

Lo! Washington and Lincoln kept
America for Englishmen!

BASIL.

Hurrah! The English people reigns
Across the wide Atlantic flood!
It could not bind itself in chains,
For Yankee blood is English blood!

HERBERT.

And here the spring is queen
In robes of white and green.

PERCY.

In chestnut sconces opening wide
Tapers shall burn some fresh May morn.

BRIAN.

And the elder brightens the highway side,
And the bryony binds the thorn.

SANDY.

White is the snow of the leafless sloe,
The saxifrage by the sedge,
And white the lady-smocks a-row
And sauce-alone in the hedge.

BASIL.

England is in her Spring ;
She only begins to be.
Oh ! for an organ voice to sing
The summer I can see !
But the Past is there ; and a mole may know,
And a bat may understand,
That we are the people wherever we go—
Kings by sea and land !

HERBERT.

And the spring is crowned and stoled
In purple and in gold.

PERCY.

Wherever light, wherever shade is,
Gold and purple may be seen.

BRIAN.

Gold and purple lords-and-ladies
Tread a measure on the green.

SANDY.

Among the long brown furrow lines
The charlock's mustard flowers come up.

HERBERT.

On happy banks the primrose shines ;
In lustrous meads, the buttercup.

HERBERT.

In deserts where the wild wind blows
Blossoms the magic hæmony.

PERCY.

Deep in the Chiltern woodland glows
The purple pasque anemone.

BASIL.

And England still grows great,
And never shall grow old ;

Within our hands we hold
The world's fate.

MENZIES.

We hold the world's fate?
The cry seems out of date.

BASIL.

Not while a single Englishman
Can work with English brains and bones!
Awaiting us since time began,
The swamps of ice, the wastes of flame
In Boreal and Austral zones
Took life and meaning when we came.
The Sphinx that watches by the Nile
Has seen great empires pass away:
The mightiest lasted but a while;
Yet ours shall not decay.
Because, although red blood may flow,
And ocean shake with shot,
Not England's sword but England's Word
Undoes the Gordian Knot.
Bold tongue, stout heart, strong hand, brave brow
The world's four quarters win;
And patiently with axe and plough
We bring the deserts in.

MENZIES.

Whence comes this patriotic craze?
Spare us at least the hackneyed brag
About the famous English flag.

BASIL.

I'll spare no flourish of its praise.
Where'er our flag floats in the wind
Order and justice dawn and shine.
The dusky myriads of Ind,
The swarthy tribes far south the line,
And all who fight with lawless law,
And all with lawless men who cope,
Look hitherward across the brine,
For we are the world's forlorn hope.

MENZIES.

That makes my heart leap up! Hurrah!
We are the world's forlorn hope!

HERBERT.

And with the merry birds we sing
The English Spring, the English Spring.

PERCY.

Iris and orchis now unfold.

BRIAN.

The drooping-leaved laburnums ope
In thunder-showers of greenish gold.

MENZIES.

And we are the world's forlorn hope!

SANDY.

The lilacs shake their dancing plumes
Of lavender, mauve, and heliotrope.

HERBERT.

The speedwell on the highway blooms.

MENZIES.

And we are the world's forlorn hope !

SANDY.

Skeletons lurk in every street.

HERBERT.

We push and strike for air and scope.

BRIAN.

The pulses of rebellion beat
Where want and hunger sulk and mope.

MENZIES.

But though we wander far astray,
And oft in utter darkness grope,
Fearless we face the roughest day,
For we are the world's forlorn hope.

SANDY.

St. George for Merry England then!
For we are all good Englishmen!

BASIL.

St. George for Greater England then!
The Boreal and the Austral men!

ALL.

By bogland, highland, down, and fen,
All Englishmen, all Englishmen!
Who with their latest breath shall sing
Of England and the English Spring!

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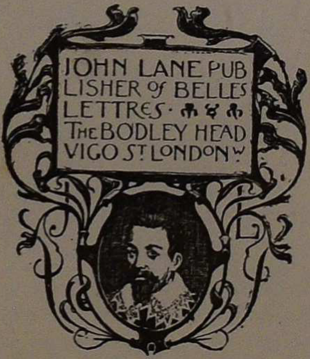
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